



GREAT GROVEHURST FARM

Update Ecological Site Walkover

Date of Report: January 2018



Update Ecological Site Walkover

Client: GH Dean

Reference: J006452

Company Registration Number: 372 4176
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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Site name, location, grid reference and size	Great Grovehurst Farm, Sittingbourne; TQ 90440 66625, 5ha.
Scope and Purpose of Works	Update Ecological Site Walkover To accompany and inform a planning application.
Dates of site visits and names of surveyors	09 January 2018 – Sally Clifton
Overview	<p>The site is divided up into 11 habitats:</p> <p>A1.1.1 Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland A2.1 Dense/Continuous Scrub B6 Species Poor Semi-Improved Grassland C3.1 Tall herb and fern - tall ruderal J1.1 Arable Cultivated Land J2.1.2 Species-poor Intact Hedge J2.3.2 Species-poor Hedge with Trees J2.4 Fence J2.5 Wall J4 Bare ground J5 Other Habitat – Large Brash Piles</p> <p>The site supports opportunities for the following notable habitats/species:</p> <p>Badger Bats Small Mammals Nesting Birds Reptiles Amphibians</p> <p>The habitats on site remain largely the same as they were during the 2012 survey. The farm buildings have now been demolished, leaving bare ground and materials arising from demolition and clearance of vegetation.</p> <p>The remainder of the site consists predominately of arable land with grassland edges. The site provides opportunities for protected species including badgers and a potential sett was recorded adjacent the eastern boundary.</p> <p>Other habitats on site including hedgerows and trees provide opportunities for nesting birds, small mammals and commuting and foraging bats.</p> <p>Grassland, tall ruderals and scrub provide opportunities for reptiles, as well as amphibians within their terrestrial phase.</p>

	<p>The habitats on site are well-managed and subject to high levels of disturbance, and therefore provide limited opportunities for wintering birds. Grassland habitats on site are limited in extent, and the field itself is relatively small. As a result, the site does not provide opportunities for wintering birds.</p>
<p>Action Required for Planning and/or Legal Compliance</p>	<p>Update badger walkover prior to works commencing</p> <p>A Precautionary Method of Working document to include badgers, small mammals, amphibians</p> <p>Trees and hedgerows will be retained where possible to maintain the green corridors around the edge of the site.</p> <p>Sensitive Lighting Scheme to minimise light spill onto the green corridors.</p> <p>A Natural England great crested newt licence application will be submitted to allow the clearance of the site of great crested newts prior to works commencing.</p>
<p>Ecological enhancement (Site ecological enhancement is required under current planning policy)</p>	<p>Bat boxes on retained trees</p> <p>Bird boxes on retained trees</p> <p>Ecological input into the landscaping scheme including consideration to enhancing the hedgerows on site by planting native species within the existing hedgerow. Consideration should also be given to creating ponds within the design</p> <p>Creation of buffer strips along hedgerows</p> <p>Creation of reptile hibernacula and basking sites</p>

Seasonal Constraints and Potential Risk to Programme

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Additional considerations
Update Badger Walkover													There are no seasonal constraints with badger surveys, however February to March is the best time for identifying activity

Note: The timings of the nesting bird season and hibernation periods are indicative only (subject to local climatic conditions)

- Optimal Survey Season
- Sub-optimal Survey Season

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2018, Ecosulis was commissioned by GH Dean to undertake an Update Ecological Walkover of the land at Great Gravenhurst Farm.
- 1.2 The purpose of this survey is to identify any changes within the habitats present on site as well as any potential for notable species on site.
- 1.3 This report has been written in accordance with British Standard BS42020:2013. Survey methodologies follow the JNCC 2010, CIEEM 2016 and Ratcliffe 1977 (Annex 1 gives full methodology). Plant names follow the nomenclature of Stace (2010)

Objectives of Study

- 1.4 The objectives of this study are: to provide update information on the existing ecological conditions at the site and assess any changes to the previous assessment; to identify potential constraints and opportunities that ecology may pose to the development plans; and to identify further ecological studies that may be required to ensure that ecology is fully considered within the proposals.

General Site Description

- 1.5 The site covers an area of 5ha, and lies immediately south-east of a roundabout at the Grovehurst junction of the A249 trunk road. Access to the site is from Grovehurst Road on its western boundary; beyond this road is arable land. To the north-east is the B2005, separating the site from an industrial site. The eastern site boundary borders the railway branch line to the Isle of Sheppey. The south-eastern border of the proposal site abuts a housing estate. To the south-west is a large residential property and adjacent gardens with a pond known to support great crested newts, some trees and scrub.
- 1.6 Part of the site was comprised of former farm buildings which have now been demolished, leaving large areas of bare ground and materials arising from demolition and clearance of vegetation. Other parts of the site were formerly grassland, some of which remains in small blocks and fringes to other features. The rest of the site is largely arable farmland. Most of the site boundary except for that along the south has belts of hedges of varying width, some with trees.

2 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS: SITE AND HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS**Component Habitats**

2.1 Species lists are provided in Annex 1. The location and extent of habitats is shown on Figure 1.

A1.1.1 Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland

2.2 Semi-natural woodland lies immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. The habitat is on a steep embankment and is at least 10m wide. Trees visible from the site comprise mostly pedunculate oak, heavily covered with ivy; there is also intermittent dense scrub dominated by blackthorn.

A2.1 Dense/Continuous Scrub

2.3 Dense Scrub on the site is predominantly bramble, occurring as borders along many of the rows of tall conifers, and as a larger area adjacent to the brick wall. Much of the dense scrub planting in between is comprised of various willow species and dogwood.

B2.1 Species Poor Semi-Improved Grassland

2.4 The grassland appears to be relatively species-poor, with dominant species including cock's-foot, red fescue and ribwort and hoary plantain. This grassland occurs as part of habitat mosaics in two blocks, with additional tall ruderal patches.

2.5 This habitat also fringes most of the boundary hedges and occurs intermittently between the bare ground and arable land, with similar composition to that in the larger areas. Immediately north of the main entrance is a short section of boundary comprised of this habitat, where tufted hair-grass is dominant. This habitat also includes tall ruderal species which are scattered throughout most of the grassland areas. This habitat also appears to be relatively species-poor, and is dominated by creeping thistle, common nettle and broad-leaved dock.

C3.1 Tall herb and fern - tall ruderal

2.6 An area of tall ruderals is also present around the edge of the hardstanding and semi-improved grassland. This area includes creeping thistle, common nettle and broad-leaved dock.

J1.1 Arable Cultivated Land

2.7 At least half the site is arable land, extending from the north-west round the eastern side to the south of the site. The field is currently under active management, and is regularly ploughed.

J2.1.2 Species-poor Intact Hedge

2.8 All the hedges on the northern half of the western boundary come within the category of Species-poor Intact Hedges, and are relatively young (20 to 30 years old: occasional trees still have broken tree guards). The hedges vary in width from 4m

to 8m. Dominant species include blackthorn and ash, with occasional hazel and buddleia. Bramble is present in places, and ground flora are very limited. Litter is abundant especially towards the roundabout.

J2.3.2 Species-poor Hedge with Trees

- 2.9 The north-eastern boundary of the site, bordering the B2005, is also relatively recently planted but has some taller trees, mainly silver birch, towards the southern end. The other three species-poor hedges with trees are all in the south-west corner of the site and comprised almost entirely of tall non-native conifers, with occasional ash saplings and bramble but very limited ground flora.

J2.4 Fence

- 2.10 Most boundaries around the site are fenced, by various materials including post and wire around the western and north-eastern sides, chainlink and barbed wire along the short section by the railway embankment, and shiplap along most of the boundary with the housing estate. Chainlink fencing is also present around the small electricity sub-station. No vegetation was recorded on these features.

J2.5 Wall

- 2.11 Two short sections of brick wall are present between the site and the adjacent private garden. One is 2.5 m high and the other 1.5m high.

J4 Bare ground

- 2.12 This covers all the footprint of former buildings and associated hard-standing, and some adjacent areas of former grassland. It is largely comprised of soil mixed with rubble and refuse, with some areas of broken tarmac near the two entrances on the western boundary. It is almost completely unvegetated and is subject to regular disturbance.

- 2.13 In some areas where hard-standing has been broken up, in patches within the bare ground and around the entrances to the site, species including annual meadow grass, daisy, mosses, and hoary plantain are present.

J5 Other Habitat – Large Brash Piles

- 2.14 These occur in several places near the rubble heaps where trees (largely non-native Conifers) and other vegetation have been cleared.

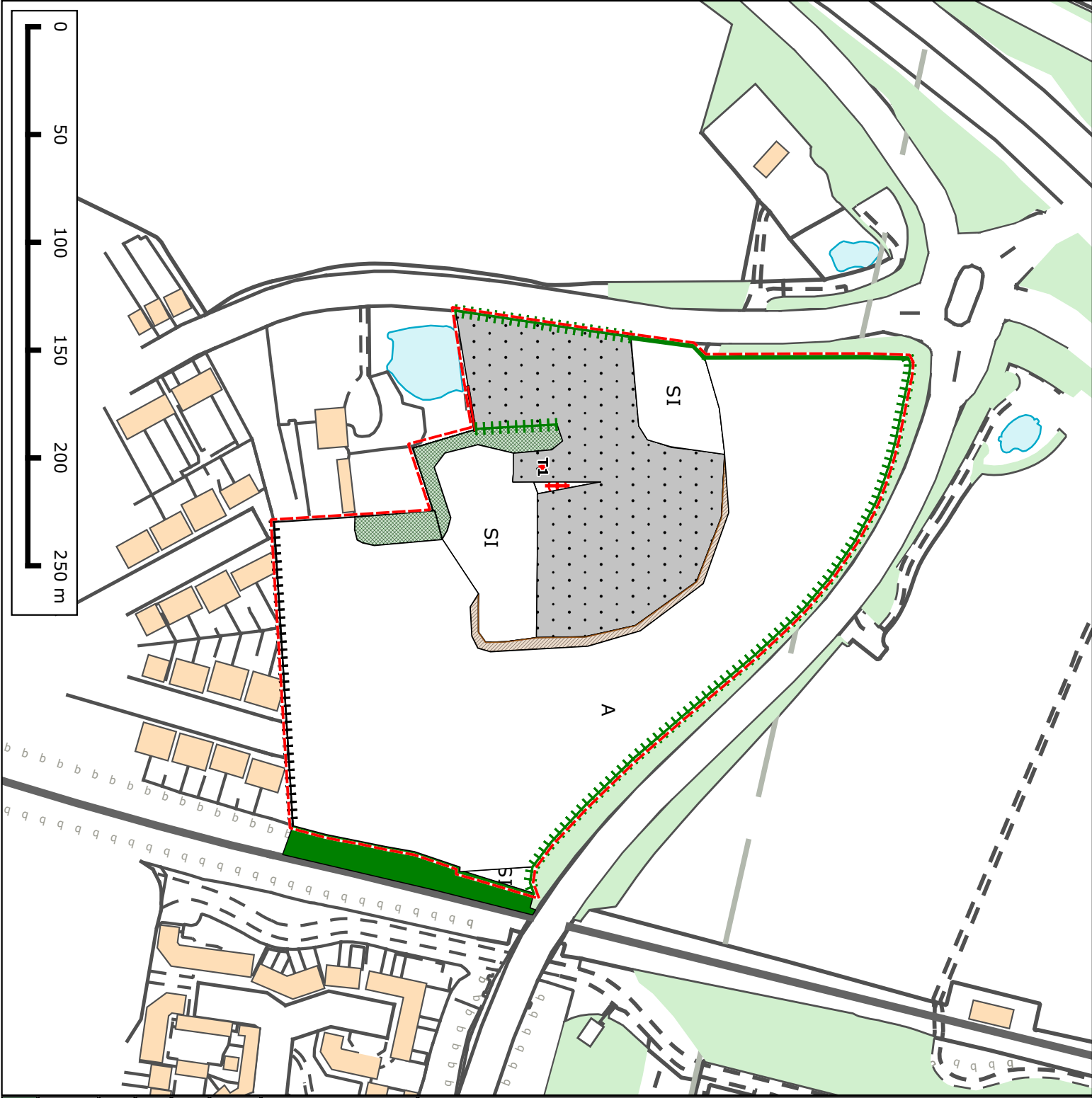
Target Note 1

- 2.15 The rubble resulting from demolition of all buildings on the site forms two adjoining very large piles. The material, comprised of brick, concrete, tarmac, some earth and refuse, has largely been crushed into smaller fragments.

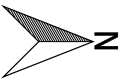
Adjacent Habitats

- 2.16 The site lies adjacent to two B roads along the northern and western boundary with residential housing and associated infrastructure located adjacent to the southern boundary. A small extent of the eastern boundary is bordered by a railway line.
- 2.17 Boundary habitats including hedgerows, connect to further habitat along the railway line and further south to an area of open grassland and arable fields.

FIGURE 1



- Key**
- Site Boundary
 - + Target Note 1 - Rubble
 - J2.1.2 Intact hedge - species-poor
 - J2.3.2 Hedge with trees - species poor
 - J2.4 Fence
 - J2.5 Wall
 - A1.1.1 Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
 - A2.1 Scrub - dense/continuous
 - B6 Species poor semi-improved grassland
 - C3.1 Tall herb and fern - tall ruderal
 - A 11.1 Arable
 - J4 Bare ground
 - + J5 Other habitat - Large Brash Piles



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January 2018

Figure 1

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3 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS: PROTECTED /NOTABLE SPECIES

Species / Species groups	Previous Surveys	Evidence of /suitability for	Action Required for Planning/Legal Compliance (Annex 4 details legislation and planning policy)
Flora	No notable species of flora have been recorded on site previously	<p>No notable species were recorded on site during the update survey.</p> <p>The site is dominated by arable land with some patches of grassland. The species within these grassland areas are common species.</p> <p>The floral diversity in general is very low on site, as such it is unlikely any notable species will be present.</p> <p>No floral invasive species area present on site.</p>	<p>Hedgerows and woodland along the boundaries of the site will be retained and protected by a buffer. This buffer will be maintained during the construction works to protect these features from the development.</p>
Badger	<p>A badger sett was recorded adjacent to the site within the survey of 2006, this sett was located adjacent to the eastern boundary along the railway embankment.</p> <p>No evidence of badgers or badger setts was recorded during the survey within 2012.</p>	<p>No evidence of badgers was recorded on site during the survey, however a potential badger sett was recorded within the railway embankment adjacent to the eastern boundary. At the time of the survey access was not available to this embankment and so the sett could not be fully assessed.</p> <p>Hedgerow and grassland habitats on site provide opportunities for commuting and foraging badgers in conjunction with surrounding habitat.</p> <p>Residential gardens to the south of the site may also provide opportunities for foraging and commuting badgers. As such it is though likely badgers may utilise the site for commuting and foraging purposes.</p>	<p>An update badger walkover will be required prior to works commencing on site to assess the activity levels of the sett adjacent to the eastern boundary.</p> <p>Works on site will continue under a Precautionary Method of Working which will include providing a means of escape for badgers, wherever deep excavations are required, in the form of a plank or a ladder. This will also include a Toolbox Talk on badgers for all site workers.</p> <p>A sensitive lighting plan will be implemented on site to maintain dark corridors along the boundaries of the site.</p>

Bats	<p>The 2012 survey assessed the site as providing moderate levels of suitable foraging habitat for bats with no roosting opportunities within the trees on site, however potential roosting opportunities within buildings on site.</p> <p>The buildings have since been demolished under Low Impact Class Licence. (LICL)</p> <p>During emergence and dawn surveys completed in 2017 to inform the LICL low levels of bat activity were recorded on site.</p>	<p>During this survey visit no trees were assessed on site as providing roosting opportunities, however some trees along the railway embankment support dense ivy and were therefore assessed as providing low roosting potential.</p> <p>Hedgerows and trees on site provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats, including some more light sensitive species as the site is subject to minimal light spill.</p> <p>The site connects to a railway line which is likely to support good commuting opportunities for bats, as such it is likely bats will utilise the site for foraging.</p>	<p>No further activity surveys are required on site. Hedgerows and trees should be retained as part of the site proposals and maintained as dark corridors.</p> <p>A sensitive lighting plan should be designed to direct light away from these features, namely the eastern boundary which supports the railway embankment.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to enhancing the site for bats by including night scented plants within the landscape plans. Bat boxes on retained trees will also enhance the site for bats.</p>
Dormice	<p>Previous surveys have found no evidence of dormice on site.</p>	<p>The site has no habitat suitable to support dormice, very little connectivity is present between the site and well-established dormice habitat, such as woodlands and further hedgerows.</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>
Other small mammals	<p>The survey completed in 2012 did not record any evidence of hedgehogs on site.</p>	<p>No evidence of hedgehogs was recorded on site during this survey, however several habitats on site provide opportunities for hedgehogs and other small mammals.</p> <p>Hedgerows and grassland areas, as well as small straw piles may provide opportunities for commuting, foraging and nesting hedgehogs and other small mammals.</p> <p>Woodland along the eastern boundary on the railway embankment also provides opportunities for small mammals, including connectivity to further grassland habitats.</p>	<p>No further surveys are required with reference to small mammals.</p> <p>Green corridors should be retained where possible to maintain connectivity across the site for small mammals.</p> <p>The works on site should continue under a Precautionary Method of Works to protect small mammals during the development. This will include sensitive timing of the works (vegetation clearance outside of hibernation season November – February)</p>

Birds	<p>The survey completed in 2012 noted there were few species of birds of interest on the site. Although The Swale is located South of the site, the site itself provides very limited opportunities for birds.</p>	<p>No notable species of birds were recorded on site during this survey. The habitats on site are well-managed and subject to high levels of disturbance, and therefore provide limited opportunities for wintering birds. Grassland habitats on site are limited in extent, and the field itself is relatively small. As a result, the site does not provide opportunities for wintering birds.</p> <p>Hedgerows and trees on site may provide opportunities for nesting birds, most likely common species.</p> <p>Grassland on site is limited and is therefore unlikely to support opportunities for ground nesting birds.</p>	<p>No further surveys are required with regards to birds.</p> <p>Hedgerows and trees should be retained on site to continue to support opportunities for nesting birds.</p> <p>Vegetation clearance works should avoid nesting bird season where possible, where not possible a pre-works nesting bird check will be required.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to providing bird boxes on retained trees to enhance opportunities on site for nesting birds.</p>
Reptiles	<p>The 2012 survey suggested there was high likelihood of lizard species on site and a likely presence of slow worm, based on local KRAAG records. An adult grass snake was also recorded near the pond around 55m north of the site. Due to the predominantly arable habitat on site it was assessed small populations of reptile may be present on site, within the grassland and scrub edges.</p>	<p>No evidence of reptiles was recorded during this survey.</p> <p>The remaining areas of grassland mosaic, adjoining hedges and dense bramble scrub have potential to provide foraging areas for common reptiles.</p> <p>There are also numerous potential basking and hibernating sites in the form of straw piles, rubble, earth mounds and refuge. However, the site is subject to regular management including ploughing and suitable opportunities are limited in extent. As such it is unlikely that the site will support a viable population of reptiles, and that it is likely to be used in conjunction with adjacent habitats.</p>	<p>As the site is dominated by arable fields, there is limited opportunities for reptiles on site. Stone piles have been created recently as a result of the building demolition and as such are unlikely to house reptiles at present. It is understood that these will be removed in February 2018.</p> <p>No further surveys are required for reptiles, however they will need to be protected under a Precautionary Method of Working Document which will include sensitive timing and directional clearance of vegetation and stone piles.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to enhancing the site for reptiles, including the installation of hibernacula and basking sites.</p>
Amphibians	<p>The Phase 1 Survey completed in 2012 stated ponds within the local area were known to support a</p>	<p>No evidence of great crested newts was recorded at the time of this survey.</p>	<p>No further surveys are required in relation to great crested newts.</p>

	<p>population of great crested newts.</p> <p>Previous great crested newt surveys completed in 2016 showed the pond to the north of the site supported a Medium population of great crested newts whilst the pond adjacent to the southern boundary supported a small population. The third pond located to the east of the site could not be surveyed due to access constraints.</p>	<p>No ponds are present within the boundary of the site. However ponds within the local area, including one adjacent to the southern boundary, are known to support populations of great crested newt.</p> <p>The site itself provides very limited opportunities for amphibians as it is dominated by arable land. Small areas of grassland are present on site, along with adjoining hedgerows.</p>	<p>Suitable mitigation has been incorporated into the scheme, which includes corridors on the southern, eastern and northern boundaries of the site, to maintain connectivity west to east across the site.</p> <p>Temporary Amphibian Fencing will be installed around the boundaries of the site and pitfall traps installed. The site would then be cleared of great crested newts with a minimum of 30 consecutive days trapping. A receptor site will be created in advance of the trapping works in the south of the site.</p>
<p>Invertebrates</p>	<p>According to the 2012 survey the only notable invertebrate species within the local area is the stag, recorded around 900m south east of the site.</p> <p>The site itself was described in the 2012 report as providing limited potential for a varied and diverse invertebrates and little potential for stag beetles.</p>	<p>No notable species of invertebrates were recorded at the time of this survey. The survey was completed within the winter months, however, which reduces the likelihood of recording invertebrates.</p> <p>Various willow tree species along the north-eastern boundary, and the Peduncular oaks on the railway embankment are generally known to support large number of invertebrates. That said these trees are outside of the site boundary.</p> <p>Habitats on site provided very limited opportunities for invertebrates and are unlikely to support a valid population.</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>
<p>Key to abbreviations</p> <p>PMW - Precautionary Method of Working</p> <p>LICL – Low Impact Class Licence</p>			

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Annex 1: PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

Survey undertaken according to Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010) Handbook for Phase I Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit. JNCC Peterborough.

The site, as defined by the client, is systematically walked and all habitats present along with their dominant flora are recorded and mapped. Where appropriate, target notes are used to highlight potential features of interest, such as provisional signs of protected or notable species, or habitat features of note. The survey considers the suitability of the habitats on site and within the accessible surroundings to support such species. Habitats are mapped using standard colour codes allowing rapid visual assessment of the extent and distribution of different habitat types.

Limitations of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal:

The survey will not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit. Some species that might use the site or be apparent at other times of year, or only in certain years, would not have been detected.

January is not an optimum month for identifying grassland species; many would not be visible at this time of year.

Annex 2: SPECIES LIST (SPECIES RECORDED ON SITE)

Nomenclature according to Stace, C. (2010) *New Flora of the British Isles* 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Flora	
Common name	Scientific name
Annual Meadow Grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Bird Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Bristly Ox-tongue	<i>Picris echioides</i>
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolium</i>
Buddleia	<i>Buddleia davidii</i>
Bulrush	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>
Bush Vetch	<i>Vicia sepium</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Crack Willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dog-rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
False Oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Field Beans?	<i>Vicia faba</i>
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Goat Willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Grey Willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Ground Ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>

Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hedge Bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>
Hoary Plantain	<i>Plantago media</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Meadow Grass sp.	<i>Poa sp.</i>
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Pendulous Sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>
Poplar sp.	<i>Populus sp.</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>
Shepherd's-purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Swine-cress sp.	<i>Coronopus sp.</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Tufted Hair-grass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Wild Mignonette	<i>Reseda lutea</i>
Willowherb sp.	<i>Epilobium sp.</i>

Annex 3: PHOTOS OF KEY FEATURES



Rubble heaps



Earth mound



Brush Pile



TN Boundary Hedge, Bare ground



Arable, E Boundary hedge



Arable, Railway boundary



Boundary with Housing



Bramble Scrub and Conifers



Wall with Brash Pile



Bramble and Conifers



Rubble Heap and Conifers



Stored Materials



Grassland and Brash Pile



Grassland and Arable



Straw Heap



Tank

Annex 4: LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICYBadgers

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which makes it illegal to kill, injure or take badgers or to interfere with a badger sett in any way. The Act defines a sett as 'any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger'.

As a protected species the badger is covered by NPPF, which states that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a planning application.

Badgers are included in the UK BAP. They are not listed as a priority species and are not afforded any specific SAP.

Abbreviations: BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan; SAP – Species Action Plan; NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework.

Birds

In Britain all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation protects birds, their eggs, dependant young, and nests while being built or whilst in use.

Reptiles

All British reptiles are partially protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), under which it is an offence to intentionally kill or injure a reptile.

Sand lizard and smooth snake and their breeding and resting places are fully protected by both the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill them or damage, destroy or obstruct their resting or breeding places. It is also an offence to disturb sand lizard or smooth snake in their resting or breeding places. This applies throughout the year whether sand lizard or smooth snake are present or not at the time of survey or work being carried out. As protected species all British reptiles are covered by NPPF, which states that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a planning application.

All six species of British reptiles are included in the UK BAP. All six of these species are included as priority species in England, though not necessarily throughout the UK. Just one of the six species, the sand lizard, is subject to a SAP.

Abbreviations: NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework; BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan; SAP – Species Action Plan.

Amphibians

There is no special protection afforded to the four commoner species of amphibian; common frog, smooth (or common) newt, palmate newt and common toad.

The natterjack toad and great crested newt and their breeding and resting places are fully protected by both the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill them or damage, destroy or obstruct their resting or breeding places. It is also an offence to disturb natterjack toad and great crested newt in their resting or breeding places. This applies throughout the year whether natterjack toad or great crested newt are present or not at the time of survey or work being carried out.

Four species of amphibian are included on the UK BAP: great crested newt, pool frog, natterjack toad and common toad. All are priority species but just three are subject to SAPs.

Abbreviations: BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan; SAP – Species Action Plan.

Great Crested Newt

The great crested newt is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) from deliberate capture, injury and killing, intentional or reckless disturbance, intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection, and deliberate damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. This applies throughout the year whether great crested newt are present or not at the time of survey or work being carried out.

As a protected species, the great crested newt is covered by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a planning application.

The great crested newt is listed as a priority species in the UK BAP and has a SAP.

Abbreviations: NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework; BAP – Biodiversity Action Plan; SAP – Species Action Plan.

National Planning Policy References

Reference should be made to the following documents:

England

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework Department for Communities and Local Government

ODPM (2005) Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System TSO

Annex 5: OVERALL SITE EVALUATION – RATCLIFFE CRITERIA (1977)

Ratcliffe, D. (1977) A Nature Conservation Review. Volume 1. CUP.

The criteria for evaluation have been adopted from the widely used set developed by Ratcliffe (1977). These were originally conceived to provide a systematic framework for the selection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC), but have since been adopted and adapted widely by ecologists, for example in Local Authorities and Wildlife Trusts.

These criteria provide a useful basis against which to evaluate the intrinsic ecological quality of a site, but in an urban area it is also important to consider the value of an area to the local people (GLC 1985). Thus the appeal of a site, its educational and amenity value, as well as its accessibility as a wildlife area, need to be included in the evaluation.

Survey results are assessed and evaluated using these criteria as a guide. They are:

Size

In general, larger sites are more highly valued than smaller ones, all else being equal. However, relative size to similar sites and other local sites should be considered. The area of a site is also important in management terms, i.e. whether short-term neglect/disturbance or any small changes would lead to the loss of a site's interest.

Diversity

One of the most important site attributes is the variety of communities and species which is largely dependent on diversity of habitats. Large numbers of species, particularly when represented by large populations, are to be valued. Diversity can also be related to habitat instability that may affect management prescriptions.

Naturalness

Ecosystems least modified by man tend to be rated more highly. However, most sites are influenced by man, the degree and nature of which is important.

Fragility

This reflects the degree of sensitivity of habitats, communities and species to environmental change. Fragile sites often represent ecosystems that are highly fragmented, dwindling or difficult to re-create.

Typicalness

Sites/habitats that are unusual within the wider ecological unit are may be of value, similarly sites/habitats that are typical and commonplace within a field of ecological variation may also be of value.

Recorded History

The existence of a scientific record of long-standing adds considerably to the value of a site.

Permanence

A site that has been occupied by a semi-natural habitat for a long time is usually more valuable than one that has only recently arisen. This is because they have had time to acquire rich assemblages of plants and animals.

Lack of Modification

Adverse influences from humans, such as inappropriate management regimes and pollution, will reduce the quality of an area.

Rarity

Rarity is concerned with communities and habitats as well as species. The presence of rare species adds to overall ecological value especially when a habitat also ranks highly on other criteria. The habitat type too may also be nationally or regionally rare.

Position in an Ecological Unit

In the event of two sites being of equivalent intrinsic value, the close proximity of one site to a highly rated example of another type increases the value of the site. The presence of other areas of semi-natural habitat adjacent or close to a site enhances the value of both habitats.

Potential Value

Certain sites could, through appropriate management or even natural change, eventually develop a nature conservation interest substantially greater than that existing at present.

Intrinsic Appeal

While science may view all creatures as equal, pragmatism dictates that in nature conservation it is realistic to give more weight to the more popular appeal of some species, groups or habitats than others.

Annex 6: DEFINING ECOLOGICAL VALUES FOR COMPONENT HABITATS – CIEEM (2016)

The examples contained in the table below are only for general guidance and other considerations may apply, e.g. features of low value in isolation but which are subject to cumulative national decline may be afforded higher values in certain circumstances.

Level of Ecological Value	Examples of Criteria
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internationally designated site or candidate site (SPA, pSPA, SAC, cSAC, Ramsar site, Biogenetic Reserve) • A sustainable area of a habitat listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive, or smaller areas of such habitat that are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole • A sustainable population of an internationally important species, e.g. a UK Red Data Book species, species listed under categories 1 or 2 of the UK BAP, or listed under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive • Sites supporting a breeding population of internationally important species or supplying a critical element of their habitat requirements
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nationally designated site (SSSI, ASSI, NNR, MNR) or a discrete area that meets the selection criteria for national designation (e.g. SSSI selection guidelines) • A sustainable area of a priority habitat identified in the UK BAP, or smaller areas of such habitat that are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole • A sustainable population of a nationally important species or a site supporting such a species, i.e. a species listed on Schedules 5 and 8 of the W&CA (as amended) which is a UK Red Data Book species that is not listed as being of unfavourable conservation status in Europe, of uncertain conservation status or of global concern in the UK BAP • A non-Red Data Book species that is listed as occurring in 15 or fewer 10km squares in the UK (categories 1 and 2 of the UK BAP). Also sites supporting a breeding population of such a species or supplying a critical element of their habitat requirements
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable areas of key habitat identified in the relevant Regional BAP or smaller areas of such habitat that are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole • Sustainable areas of key habitat identified as being of Regional Value in the appropriate Natural Areas profile • A population of a species listed as being nationally scarce (i.e. occurring in 16 - 100 10km squares in the UK, or in a Regional BAP or relevant Natural Area on account of its regional rarity or localisation. Sites supporting a breeding population of such a species or supplying a critical element of their habitat requirements • Sites, which exceed the County-level designations but fall short of SSSI selection guidelines, where these occur
County/ Metropolitan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-natural ancient woodland greater than 0.25 ha

Level of Ecological Value	Examples of Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County/Metropolitan sites and other sites which meet the ecological selection criteria for designation • A sustainable area of habitat identified in a county BAP • A population of a species that is listed in a county/metropolitan 'red data book' or BAP on account of its regional rarity or localisation. Also sites supporting a breeding population of such a species or supplying a critical element of their habitat requirements
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-natural ancient woodland smaller than 0.25 ha • Sustainable areas of habitat identified in a sub-county (district/borough) BAP or in the relevant Natural Area profile • Sites/features that are scarce within the district/borough or which appreciably enrich the district/borough habitat resource • A diverse and/or ecologically valuable hedgerow network • A population of a species that is listed in a district/borough BAP because of its rarity in the locality or in the relevant Natural Area profile because of its regional rarity or localisation. Also sites supporting a breeding population of such a species or supplying a critical element of their requirements
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of habitat considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the context of the Parish or local neighbourhood, e.g. isolated species-rich hedgerows
Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small patches of poor semi-improved grassland, amenity grassland not used by badgers
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of little current or potential ecological value