
**BOTANICAL AND PHASE ONE HABITAT SURVEY
PROPOSED GEORGES FIELD CAR PARK, HATFIELD PARK**

Undertaken on behalf of:

**Gascoyne Cecil Estates
Hatfield
Hertfordshire**

Report produced by:

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CLIENT BRIEF

- Undertake a Phase One Habitat Survey of the site known as Georges Field and map the habitats.
- Record the plant species found within the site and list
- Survey the site for badger activity and plot onto map if required
- Evaluate the site's existing botanical and wildlife value

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Georges Field is an area of improved grassland that lies on the fringes of the managed gardens and farmland of Hatfield House. It is managed as a close mown amenity area. Other uses have included grazing when the estate managed a herd of dairy cattle and rare breed flock of sheep. It is now an amenity area for estate activities. At some time in its past it would have sustained a reasonably rich plant community as indicated by the species still present along a small strip of the grassland. An outgrown hedgerow of parkland type ornamental trees provides a potential feeding habitat for bats and nest sites for birds. Badgers are recorded within Hatfield Park but no field signs were recorded during the survey. Georges Field is of low ecological value and if planning permission is granted for the new car park it would have minimal impact on the ecology and wildlife in this area of Hatfield Park

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Georges Field is situated at grid reference TL084235 within Gascoyne Cecil's Hatfield Park estate in Hertfordshire.
- 2.2 I have been retained by the estate to carry out a Phase One habitat and botanical survey of Georges Field so that they can gain a better knowledge of the site's existing ecological status and wildlife value. This will also include a survey for badgers (*Meles meles*), to provide base-line information.
- 2.3 The small area of grassland, 0.8ha once formed part of Home Farm and was used for grazing by the Estate's herd of Jersey cows. Since the closure of Home Farm for dairy production in the 1980s the field has been used for temporary grazing of rare breed Black Welsh Mountain sheep and more recently as amenity grassland for estate activities.
- 2.4 The estate is developing a livestock farm and play area to the south of Georges Field. As part of this plan they will need to provide additional parking facilities. It also intends to return the farm buildings of Home Farm back to their original use and rare breed farm stock will be housed there. In preparation of this, 9.98ha of grazing meadows have already been established adjacent to Georges Field.
- 2.5 Both the sister estate in Cranbourne, Dorset and The Hatfield Estate have a long association in keeping traditional farm breeds, and the livestock farm will play a major role in the education of visitors into this aspect of country life.
- Georges Field

3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The mapping of the habitats in the area of Georges Field has been undertaken using the standard Phase One Habitat Survey technique.
- 3.2 The method for Phase One surveys entails mapping habitats within parcels of land normally onto a 1:10,000 scaled map. Using a nationally recognized series of colour codes, a rapid visual assessment can be made as to the complexes of the habitat communities of distinct areas.
- 3.3 Listing dominant species and using descriptive targets notes provides further information.
- 3.4 Because of the small size of the survey area, it is not possible to map sufficient information onto a map scaled at 1:10,000; therefore a scale of 1: 500 has been used.
- 3.5 A walkover survey has been undertaken to record the vascular plants, including grasses, throughout the area, together with the vegetative habitats. Individual plant communities have not been mapped, as this would be more appropriately undertaken in a Phase Two Survey if required. Specific vegetative habitats have been mapped and the site's habitat composition has been evaluated.
- 3.6 The site was also surveyed for signs of badger; setts, latrines, runs and foraging areas have been searched for.

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 The site comprises of 3 dominant habitats, relic out grown hedgerow, newly planted mixed native hedgerow and short improved grassland.
- 4.2 The relic out grown hedgerow consists of some native trees and has been inter-planted with species that are generally found within a parkland landscape. Dense shade covers the immediate area under the trees and ground flora is sparse.
- 4.3 The recently planted hedgerow is on a small bank and comprises of all native species. It follows an old estate fence line that ha been removed in recent years. A small number of plants including Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* agg Birdsfoot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* were recorded during the survey in this narrow strip of grassland. They are indicative of species rich grasslands and are remnants of a richer plant community that existed in Georges Field at one time.
- 4.4 Short improved amenity grassland makes up the majority of the survey area. The flora recorded is typical of neutral grassland and there are no dominant plant communities; a full species list is appended. It is not possible to estimate when a richer plant community existed before the field was given over to amenity use but it would have been a gradual decline over many years.
- 4.5 No evidence that badgers were using this site to either breed or forage could be detected.

5.0 EVALUATION

- 5.1 Georges Field was once a species rich area of grassland with its associated hedgerows that sits within a mosaic of wildlife and managed landscaped that is found in this part of Hatfield Park Estate. Years of amenity use have left the grassland species poor with very little ecological or wildlife value.
- 5.2 The relic out grown hedgerow is isolated from other hedgerows and is most likely an old boundary that has been planted with parkland tree species at some time in the past. It does offer potential for foraging bats and breeding birds and it will continue to do so. Generally, semi-natural ancient hedgerows, because of their antiquity and assemblages of plants and fauna are highly valued, however in this instance the value is much reduced when the hedgerow becomes unsustainable and too small to sustain a varied biodiversity.
- 5.3 The newly planted native species hedgerow will take many years to offer a diverse, dense habitat that will attract breeding birds and other wildlife and is of low ecological and wildlife value.
- 5.4 No breeding or foraging badger activity was detected.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Georges Field has a low ecological value with limited potential to increase this and it will deteriorate even further ecologically. The development of the Livestock Farm will mean that extra parking facilities are required and if Georges Field is used for this purpose the 9.98ha of grazing meadow already created will more than mitigate any loss of biodiversity from Georges Field.
- 6.2 It is worth noting that generally grassland habitats and associated hedgerows that are created by sensitive management through livestock grazing offer far greater potential for wildlife and this will ultimately increase biodiversity and the overall ecological and wildlife value of this part of Hatfield Park Estate.

7.0 List of species recorded on site

7.1 Woody Plants and trees

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus spp</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Horse-Chestnut	<i>Aesculus spp</i>

7.2 Vascular higher plants

Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Ground Elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Curled Dock	<i>R. crispus</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Bittersweet	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>
Fat Hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>
Field Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
American Willowherb	<i>Epilobium ciliatum</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>C. arvense</i>
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium holosteoides</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Red Dead Nettle	<i>L. purpureum</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra agg</i>
Scented Mayweed	<i>Matricaria recutita</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Greater Plantain	<i>P. major</i>
Rough Hawk's beard	<i>C. biennis</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>

Dandelion	<i>Taraxcum officinale</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Meadow Cranesbill	<i>Geranium pratense</i>
Herb Robert	<i>G. robertianum</i>
Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Groundsel	<i>S. vulgaris</i>
Common Sowthistle	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>
Hedge Mustard	<i>Sisymbrium offcinlae</i>
Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>
Shepherd's Purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>

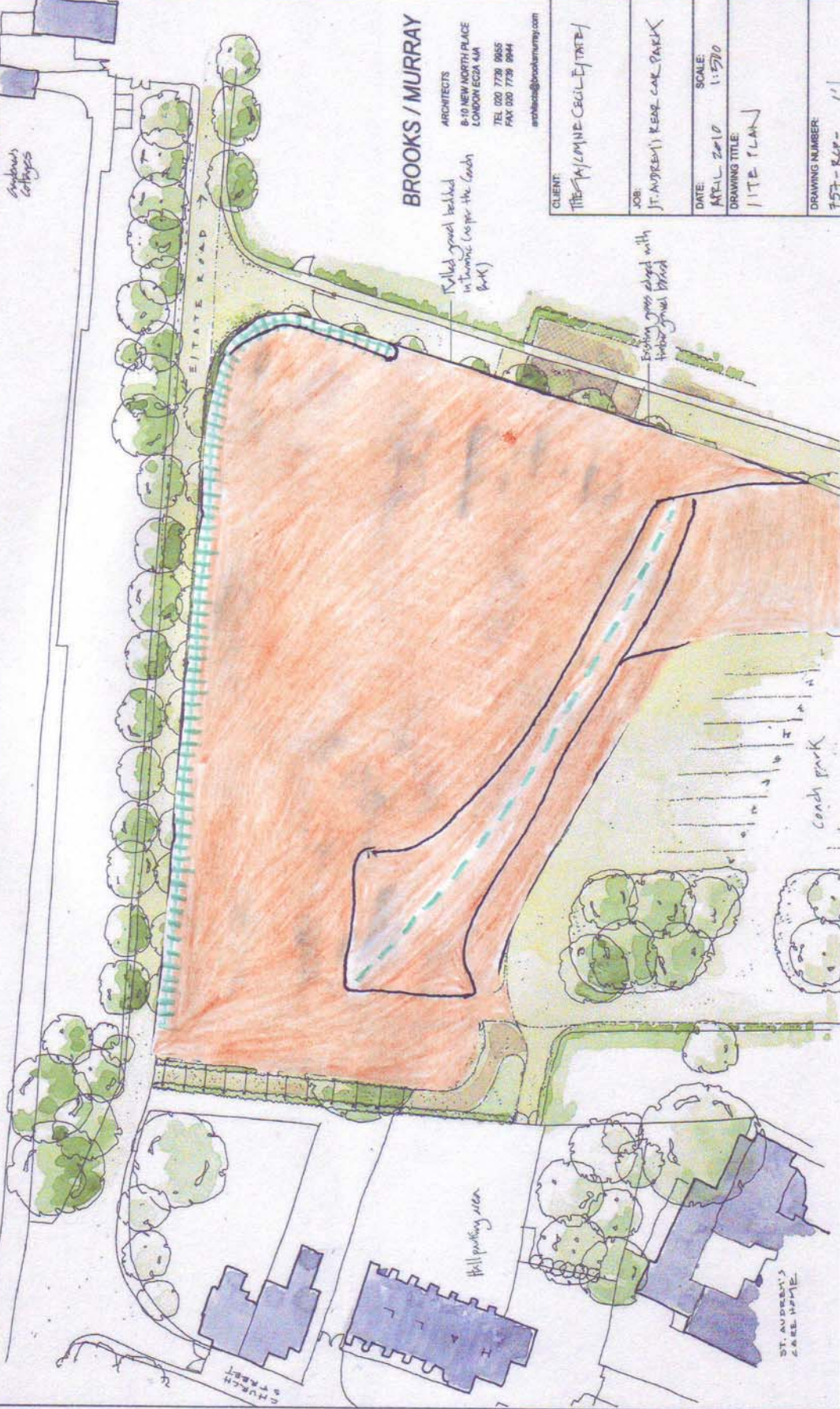
7.3 Grasses

Couch-grass	<i>Agropyron repens</i>
Perennial rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Timothy grass	<i>Phleum pratense</i>
Creeping bent	<i>A. stolonifera</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>

7.4 Fungi

Shaggy Parasol	<i>Lepiota rhacodes</i>
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*Real - View changed access entrance
relevant*

