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**BOTANICAL AND PHASE ONE HABITAT SURVEY OF  
PROPOSED VIADUCT 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 proposed Viaduct Car Park site 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

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 The site for the proposed car park is a small area of secondary woodland that has developed over many years from parkland or garden. There are some mature trees that have potential for roosting or feeding bats. However; when taken in the context of its position adjacent to 12.7ha of very diverse ancient woodland to the north, its value as a foraging area for bats would be minimal.
- 1.2 The flora recorded during the Phase One Survey is typical of deep shaded woodland and is species poor compared to the adjacent managed ancient woodland.
- 1.3 Badgers are recorded within Hatfield Park but no field signs were recorded during the survey.
- 1.4 The site is of low ecological value. Should permission be granted for the new car park it would have minimal impact on the ecology and wildlife in this area of Hatfield Park

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## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The site is situated at grid reference TL087235 in Gascoyne Cecil's Hatfield Park Estate in Hertfordshire.
- 2.2 The Estate wish to reposition existing car parks and have indicated this area as one option. I have been retained by the Estate at the north front of Hatfield House and the Cricket Pitch to carry out a Phase One habitat and botanical survey of Park Cottage Spinney, 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 secondary woodland has developed over many years and may have been part of Hill House which is an area of estate property adjoining the area to the west. The southern edge is possibly an old hedge line with two hazel stools still remaining. The remainder of its boundary is formed by an estate road and a small area of close mown verge, approximately 240 m<sup>2</sup> at the northern tip of the area.
- 2.4 The assemblage of tree species recorded during the survey would indicate the area was part of a parkland landscape and not part of the ancient woodland block to the north

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### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The mapping of the habitats in the area of the site 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.
- 3.6 The site was also surveyed for signs of badger; setts, latrines, runs and foraging areas have been search for.

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## 4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 The site comprises of 2 dominant habitats, secondary woodland and short improved grassland.
- 4.2 The secondary woodland contains several species trees that appear to have been part of a parkland landscape and planted specifically in the area. Other native species are also found. There are two Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) stools that appear to have been part of an old boundary hedgerow that existed at some point in the Estate's history. The flora is very sparse due to deep shade over most of the wooded area and the species recorded are a community of plants typically found in this type of habitat. There are constraints in surveying in mid summer and there is a possibility that Bluebell (*Endymion non-scriptus*) and other spring flowering species could be present as none of the vegetation is visible at this time of year but previous surveys of adjacent woodland would indicate only common species may be present. The Ivy (*Hedera helix*) growing on some of the trees would provide nesting habitat for woodland bird species and may hide potential roosting sites for bats from view. Ref Target Note 1.
- 4.3 The small strip of short improved grass verge has no dominant plant communities and is species poor. It may have been sown, but it appears to have developed over many years in the area that is less shaded by the trees.
- 4.4 No evidence that badgers are using this site either to breed or forage could be found.

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## 5.0 EVALUATION

- 5.1 The site is a small area of secondary woodland that has developed from parkland or garden origins. The oldest features are the two Hazel *Corylus avellana* stools which are remnants of an old boundary. The woodland is typical of unmanaged garden or parkland. The ornamental trees would have been planted as part of the landscape and native trees have colonised the area from the adjacent ancient woodland that is found in this part of the estate.
- 5.2 The grassland has developed from the woodland edge and has been mown as part of the estates management. The diversity of species found within it is very poor.

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## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The site has a low ecological value with limited potential to increase its diversity because of its size and it will continue to deteriorate ecologically. It is adjacent to 12.7ha of diverse ancient woodland that is under regular assessment and proscribed management. Any loss of habitat and wildlife value will be compensated for by current planting quotas and management that the estate already has in place.

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## 7.0 List of species recorded

### 7.1 Woody Plants and trees

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus spp</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
Lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>

### 7.2 Vascular higher plants

Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Ground Elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Fat Hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>C. arvense</i>
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium holosteoides</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Upright Hedge-parsley	<i>Torilis japonica</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxcum officinale</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Herb Robert	<i>G. robertianum</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Groundsel	<i>S. vulgaris</i>
Common Sowthistle	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>
Ground Ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>

### 7.3 Grasses

Couch-grass	<i>Agropyron repens</i>
Rye Grass	<i>Secale cereale</i>
Creeping bent	<i>A. stolonifera</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Wild Oat	<i>Avena fatua</i>
Hairy Brome	<i>Bromus ramosus</i>
Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>

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