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Ecological Walkover Survey

Project	Campus West, Welwyn Garden City
Client	Welwyn and Hatfield Borough Council
Date	18/08/2021
Surveyor	Hattie Taylor, Consultant Ecologist
Author	Hattie Taylor, Consultant Ecologist
Reviewer	Simon Thomas MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist

Summary: An ecological walkover assessment has been undertaken of Campus West. An extended phase one habitat assessment of the site was undertaken by TMA in December 2019 (1910026-ED-01 Campus West and Town Centre North Extended Phase One Habitat Assessment). This report is an update to the Campus West area of the proposed development site only. This report details an updated site assessment due to a minor change in the boundary of the site and further details on the planned development.

The site is dominated by a car park comprising hard standing and scattered trees. Woodland is present to the north of the site and a small area of woodland is present in the south-west corner of the site. The proposed development site is located directly adjacent to 'Dismantled Railway E. of Sherrardspark Wood' Local Wildlife Site.

No notable changes have been recorded since the original report. The site has potential for the following protected species: great crested newts, reptiles, dormice, nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats, hedgehogs and rabbits. Recommendations for these species are included within the original phase one habitat assessment report.

Recommendations are included at the end of this report for measures to enhance the site for local biodiversity.

Purpose of this report

The proposed development involves the construction of a multistorey carpark in place of the current car park.

The Barn, Feltimores Park, Chalk Lane, Harlow, Essex, CM17 0PF
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The central grid reference for the site is TL 23881 13206. The surveyed area covers approximately 2.5 hectares.

The site is located in Welwyn Garden City Centre and is bordered to the north by 'Dismantled Railway E. of Sherrardspark Wood' Local Wildlife Site. Parkland is present to the south-east of the site and the broader area surrounding the site is predominantly residential.

An extended phase one habitat assessment of the site was undertaken by TMA in December 2019 (1910026-ED-01 Campus West and Town Centre North Extended Phase One Habitat Assessment). This report is an update to the Campus West area of the proposed development site only. This report details an updated site assessment due to a minor change in the boundary of the site and further details on the planned development. The full report includes full details on relevant planning policy and wildlife conservation legislation.
This report updates rather than supersedes the recommendations of the original report, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

This report assesses the ecological interest of the site and the potential impacts of the proposed works on biodiversity. This report identifies key ecological constraints associated with the works; identifies any mitigation measures likely to be required; identifies any additional surveys that may be required; and identifies opportunities to deliver ecological enhancement.

This report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM, 2017) and with Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BSI, 2013).

As the attributes of the site and its potential for protected, notable and invasive species may change over time, this report is broadly considered valid for a duration of two years, after which time it is recommended that an update site assessment is undertaken. In some cases, protected or invasive species' use of a site may change over a shorter timescale, for instance the extent of invasive plant species, which may change month to month. In such cases, appropriate precautionary advice or recommendations for update surveys are given within this report. Refer to the full report (1910026-ED-01 Campus West and Town Centre North Extended Phase One Habitat Assessment) for information on the data search for records of protected species in the local area and sites of significance for nature in the surrounding area.

An updated data search was not undertaken during this update as the original report is less than two years old and the habitats within the site and the surrounding area have not been significantly altered. It is therefore not considered to be a significant limitation to this update assessment.

Survey methodology

The site was accessed during July 2021, a time when the majority of plant species would be expected to be evident, particularly extensive stands of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *(Fallopia japonica)* or giant hogweed *(Heracleum mantegazzianum).* Where further botanical or invasive species surveys are considered necessary, these have been recommended within this report.

The survey was undertaken on 23rd of July 2021 by Hattie Taylor of Tim Moya Associates, an experienced ecological consultant and Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). During the survey the weather conditions were not considered to pose any limitations to the survey.

The site was inspected for evidence of and its potential to support protected or notable species, especially those listed under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), including those given extra protection under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and Countryside & Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, and listed on the UK and local Biodiversity Action Plans. Such species include bats, badgers and birds.

The site was searched for evidence of invasive plant species, such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), horizontal/wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) and floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*).

A bat scoping survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016). Trees were inspected from ground level, using binoculars where needed and a high-powered torch to inspect potential bat roost features. Where possible, a ladder was used to inspect features within 3 m of ground level. An endoscope was used to investigate cavities where possible. All

aspects of each tree were viewed, and wherever visibility was restricted (e.g. due to ivy or foliage), this is stated in the report.

Evidence searched for included bat droppings, feeding remains, staining from urine or grease marks and potential access points into roosting cavities. Features indicating potential for bat roosts included holes in tree trunks, cracks in tree limbs, loose bark and dense ivy growth.

Results

Photographs of the site are included in Appendix 1 of this memo.

No notable changes from the previous ecological survey were noted within the site. The full habitat descriptions and protected species assessments are included in the original report and the information included here is a summary only.

The site is dominated by a car park comprising hard standing and scattered trees. Woodland is present to the north of the site and a small area of woodland is present in the south-west corner of the site. Mature trees are present within the south of the site. Areas of introduced shrub and amenity grassland are present in the south of the site.

The proposed development site is located directly adjacent to 'Dismantled Railway E. of Sherrardspark Wood' Local Wildlife Site which connects to Sherrardspark Wood SSSI and LNR. The proposed development is not due to impact this area.

<u>Great crested newts</u>

The existing habitats within the development footprint itself comprise mostly buildings, hard standing and short-mown amenity grassland. As such, great crested newts (if present) would not be expected to be found sheltering within these habitats, although they may occasionally cross them. Areas of woodland along the north of the site may provide some potential shelter

<u>Reptiles</u>

The woodland and scrub habitats within the south of the site and the woodland to the north offer some limited habitat for reptiles, particularly slow-worms.

Bats

The trees due to be impacted by the proposed development were assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats, due the absence of suitable roosting features.

Due to the habitats present within the site and the local landscape, it is considered likely that foraging or commuting bats use the site to a certain extent, particularly within the woodland to the north and in the south of the site.

Dormice

Due to the limited extent of suitable habitats present dormice are considered unlikely to be present, however woodland present along the northern boundary of the Campus West section of the site may provide some potential habitat.

Nesting birds

The site includes trees, scrub, shrubs and hedgerows, all of which are suitable for nesting birds during the nesting season (typically March to August inclusive).

Hedgehogs

The site includes habitats suitable for hedgehogs to be present. Whilst not a strictly protected species, the hedgehog is listed as a Species of Principal Importance and measures should be made to protect and encourage hedgehog populations.

Rabbits

A disused rabbit burrow is present in the south of the site (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Although not protected by conservation legislation, rabbits are covered by the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996, which prevents crushing of mammal species (amongst other offences).

Recommendations

The original report for this site includes recommendations to prevent harm to species that may be present within the site. No new recommendations have been added since the original report.

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Opportunities for Biodiversity Enhancement

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, recommended opportunities for biodiversity enhancement (above and beyond those required to mitigate for the identified impacts) are set out below. The below recommendations may not all be feasible within the final development and alternative enhancements should also be considered. A detailed Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement scheme may be appropriate to confirm the details and locations of enhancements which are due to be included within the development.

Tree and shrub planting

Wherever possible, additional tree and shrub planting is recommended within the site which will increase connectivity for dispersing wildlife including bats, birds and invertebrates. Native species should be used within planting schemes. Tree species such as blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris* sens.str), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and English oak (*Quercus robur*) could be used to provide known benefit to wildlife. Shrub planting should include a variety of species found on the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Plants for Pollinators' lists, such as lavender (*Lavandula* species), knapweeds (*Centaurea* species), guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), barberry (*Berberis species*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera peridymenum*).

Grassland planting

Wherever possible, areas of informal 'meadow' grassland should be included, seeded with a species-rich wildflower grassland mix to provide foraging opportunities, particularly for pollinating invertebrates. Areas of longer informal grassland also offer shelter for reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Recommended grassland species are included in the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Plants for Pollinators' lists.

Bird boxes (general)

Installation of bird boxes increases nesting opportunities for bird species. A variety of bird box designs are available, for installation on existing mature trees, on external building walls,

or to be in-built into the structure of new buildings. Bird boxes should be installed at least 2 m in height facing north and east, thus avoiding strong sunlight and wet winds.

House sparrow nest boxes

The house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is an iconic species whose populations have faced steep declines in recent decades. It is recommended that 'sparrow terraces' are installed on the building. Boxes are available which are designed to be incorporated into the fabric of a building as it is built and are both unobtrusive and aesthetically pleasing. Boxes should be installed between 2 and 5 m above ground, preferably avoiding areas that are exposed to strong sunlight or prevailing winds. Siting boxes close to vegetation is helpful for young birds taking their first flights.

Bat boxes

The inclusion of bat boxes provides new roost sites for bats within the local area. A variety of bat box designs are available, for installation on existing mature trees, on external building walls, or to be in-built into the structure of new buildings. Bat boxes should be located in sheltered spots away from artificial lighting and placed at a height of at least 3 metres from the ground, ideally facing south.

Log Piles

To enhance the site for invertebrates such as the stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), it is recommended that log piles, 2 m width/length and 1 m in height, are created in shaded and undisturbed locations, within the site.

Appendix 1 – Photographs

Photo 1 – Car park with scattered trees.	Photo 2 – Grassland with mature trees in the south of the site.
	
Photo 3 – Disused rabbit hole in the south of the site.	Photo 4 – Woodland to the north of the site.
	

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Appendix 2 – Habitat Plan

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Target Note	Description
2	Rabbit burrow.
14	Mature oaks present within this habitat.
15	Mature oaks present within this habitat.
17	Mature oaks present within this habitat.

Campus West

Library

TN15

G4

TN14

TN2

TN17

GARDEN CITY

Site overview

Sherrardspark

Peartree

0 10 20 40 Metres

Legend

- Boundary
- TargetNote
- TreeGroup
- Building
- Standing water
- Intact hedge - species-poor
- Defunct hedge - species-poor
- Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
- Scrub - dense/continuous
- Amenity grassland
- Introduced shrub
- Defunct hedge - species-poor
- Hedge with trees - species-poor
- Hardstanding
- Bare ground

Drawing title:
Phase 1 Plan

Project Name:
Campus West and Town Centre North

Date	Drawn by	Check by
11/08/2021	JCF	-

Drawing No	Rev	Scale
191026-EC-01	-	1:800

The original of this drawing was produced in colour -a monochrome copy should be relied upon

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Target Note Schedule

Target notes

Object ID	Type	Notes and findings
2	Mammal evidence	Rabbit burrow.
14	Miscellanous target note	Mature oaks present within this habitat.
15	Miscellanous target note	Mature oaks present within this habitat.
17	Miscellanous target note	Mature oaks present within this habitat.

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