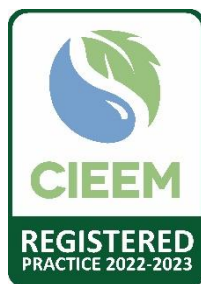


**Land at Walden Acres,
Wokingham Road,
Hurst,
RG10 0RU**

**PROVISIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
(including Phase 1 Bat survey)**

NOVEMBER 2022

Dr.Jonty Denton (Chartered Ecologist) FRES FLS MCIEEM CECol



Prepared by

Dr. Jonty Denton *BSc (Hons) D(Phil) FRES, FLS, MCIEEM, CECol*
(Chartered Ecologist)

31 Thorn Lane, Four Marks, Hampshire, GU34 5BX

Phone: (01420) 565647 mobile: [REDACTED]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report constitutes an assessment of the potential impacts arising from the proposed development of Land at Walden Acres, Wokingham Road, Hurst RG10 0RU. (GR: SU800733)

The site comprises an area of open mown improved grassland flanked by ornamental hedging.

No further surveys of the vertebrate interest on site are recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

This report presents the results of a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) of proposed development of land at Walden Acre on Wokingham Road in Hurst.

The report has been prepared for Mr T Drake, Mr R Drake and Churchgate Premier Homes.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the ecological value of the site and identify its suitability for protected animal species. This is used to identify ecological constraints on the proposed creation of a woodland area.

METHODS

General

A Phase 1 habitat survey and Provisional Environmental Assessment (PEA) were undertaken in line with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017), which indicates that a PEA normally involves:

A desk study (gathering information from national websites)

An assessment of the possible presence of protected or priority species and the likely importance of habitat features, and notes including mapping of any incidental sightings of non-native invasive plant species and protected or priority mammal species.

The results provide an ecological description of the site and information about species that may occur there. It either allows evaluation of the ecological importance of the site, or - if insufficient to do so - indicates what further surveys are needed.

The phase 1 habitat survey (including habitat assessment for protected species) was carried out on 12th November 2022 by Dr Jonty Denton (Chartered Ecologist).

Background Data Search

A desk-based assessment was carried out using the DEFRA MagicMap website <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> to identify all designated sites within 5km of the site and all other designated sites and protected species within 2km.

A search was made for information on statutory designated sites (often internationally and nationally important sites for ecology) and non-statutory designated sites (often important in a local context) within 1 km of the site boundary.

Habitat Survey

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site was examined using appropriate methods generally following NCC (1990)¹ for Phase 1 habitat survey, with procedures appropriately selected from Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995) and Jermy *et al.* (1995) for species and any specialist habitat appraisal as required, and/or the current guidance on survey methods and Ecological Impact Assessment from the (Chartered) Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (*e.g.* CIEEM 2013, IEEM 2007 and updates).

Invasive Non-native Species

Phase 1 habitat survey does not involve exhaustive surveying for any individual plant species, but if invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), *e.g.* *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (Giant Hogweed), *Impatiens glandulifera* (Himalayan Balsam) or *Reynoutria japonica* (Japanese Knotweed), were seen during the normal course of the survey then they were noted.

Habitat Assessment for Protected Vertebrates

Introduction

The site was assessed for its suitability to support protected species that are likely to occur in the area. These were:-

Birdlife

The site was assessed for its potential for breeding birds as well as foraging and wintering use-age.

Bats

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) provides guidance for bat survey work in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2016). It contains a methodology for undertaking bat surveys. The field surveys carried out as part of this assessment were undertaken according to these guidelines.

██████████

An initial assessment was carried out to identify areas that might be used by ██████████ for commuting, foraging and sett-building within 30 m of the field. This involved a search for setts, foraging signs, paths (runs) and latrines.

Reptiles

The site was assessed for its potential for commoner reptile species.

Amphibians

The suitability of aquatic and terrestrial habitat on the site and in the immediate vicinity was considered (where accessible), along with the habitat-connectivity between suitable habitat areas. Aerial photography and Ordnance Survey maps were examined for ponds or other suitable breeding habitat within 500 m of the site.

RESULTS

Background Data Search

Biodiversity Action Plans

There are no priority habitats on site. However lowland deciduous woodland is present 232m to the south and 273m to the west.

Designated Sites

Statutory Sites

There are no statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site boundary, the nearest being Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI 1.3km to the west.

The site falls outside the Nitrate vulnerable zone (2017)

Non-statutory

Lavells lake LNR is 1.5km to the west

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site is the western half of a large garden dominated by improved amenity grassland (See figures 2-3). There are two large patches of fox and cubs near the entrance gate.

The site is bounded on three sides by ornamental hedge dominated by x Leylandii planted in 1970s. The western boundary has a section with planted laurels (some to 3m but others only 1.5 in height) and overgrown with brambles.

The northern boundary has a row of x Leylandii with a medium sized sycamore backed by a dry ditch with a lower hedge mainly of field maple beyond which is a pasture field.

There are some suckering English elms at base of southern hedge line.

There are two tall birch trees growing in the northwest corner adjacent to a line of very tall >20m x Leylandii. There are sparsely vegetated areas at the base of the western hedge with numerous ruderals. A list of vascular plants is given in Appendix 1.

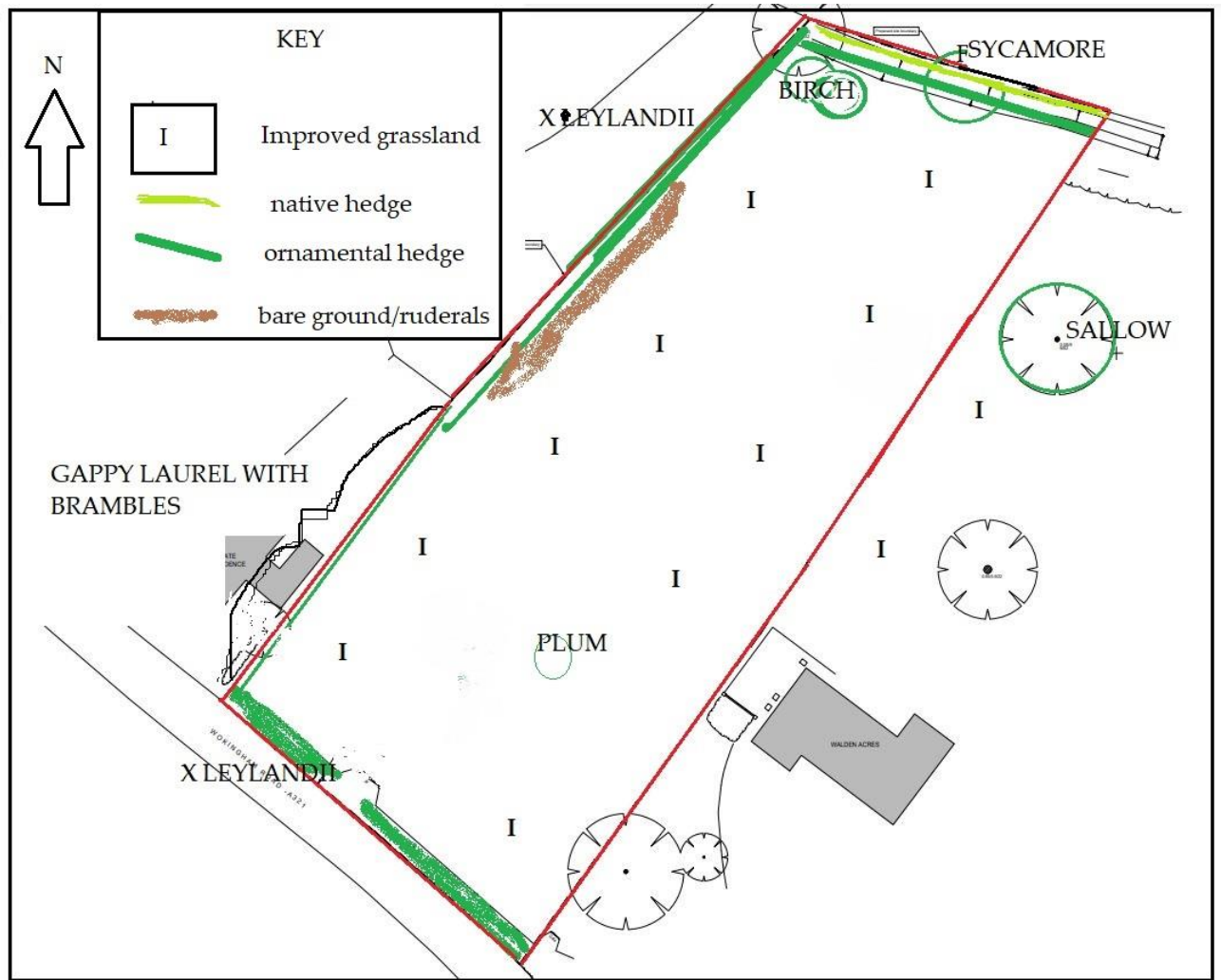


Figure 1. Habitat map.



Figure 2. Site looking southwest



Fig 3. Site looking northwest



Fig 4. Looking north along western boundary

Invasive Non-native Species

No plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were recorded on the site.

Habitat Assessment for Protected Vertebrates

Birdlife

All wild birds are protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, from damage or destruction of their nest whilst in use or construction, some birds listed on Schedule 1 receive additional protection from disturbance during nesting.

The surrounding hedgerows provide suitable nesting habitat for many species including wood pigeon and collared dove. Birdlife recorded on site include Blue Tit, Robin, Mistle Thrush, and Wood Pigeon.

██████████

██████████ are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which makes it illegal to kill, injure or take a ██████████ or to interfere with their setts; such as by the use of heavy machinery nearby.

There was no sign of any [REDACTED] activity on site.

Bats

According to DEFRA's Magicmap, four Bat licenses have been issued for properties within 1km of the plot. The nearest for a site 434m to the west off School Rd. in Hurst.

There are no potential roosting sites on site. The peripheral hedgerows and woodland offer excellent foraging and commuting opportunities.

Common Reptiles

All native British reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) from killing and injury. All native UK reptiles are UK BAP Priority Species and SPI.

The plot has negligible potential for reptiles.

Amphibians

Great Crested Newts are protected under schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 2010 from intentional killing and injury and from intentional damage, destruction or obstruction of access to a place of shelter. In addition Great Crested Newts and Common Toads are UK BAP Priority species and SPI.

Common Toads are included in Schedule 41 of the NERC act 2006.

According to Magic the closest GCN returns are from Dunston Wood 2.3km to the southwest in Winnersh. There is no standing water on site and no permanent ponds within 500m: the closest is 630m away in Dunston Park to the east. The grassland is not currently suitable for amphibians. There is some limited potential for common amphibians to utilise the hedgerow bases bordering the field.

EVALUATION

Designated Sites

There are no designated sites within 4km.

Habitats

There are no priority habitats on site.

Invasive Plant Species

Although no invasive species were identified during the survey, it is an offence under Section 14(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 Part II.

Protected Animals

Birdlife

All nesting birds are protected by legislation. The trees around the site edge have potential for nesting birds, but the field

Any site preparation and planting should be carried out outside the breeding season (mid-March-mid-July).

██████████

██████████ occur in the wider area and are likely to occasionally move/forage across the site, therefore, good building practice should be followed (such as placing boards over holes or trenches overnight) to prevent animals being harmed during site works.

Bats

There are no structures or trees on site with potential for roosting bats and therefore no further surveys will be required. Development would undoubtedly impact on bat activity and issues such as lighting and connectivity (Bat Conservation Trust, 2008) should be mitigated for in the form of a CMEP.

Common Reptiles

The site has negligible potential to support reptiles, and a presence /absence survey is not warranted

Amphibians

There is some limited potential for common amphibians to utilise the hedgerow bases bordering the plot.

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Appendix 1. Plant species list

LD =locally dominant, F= frequent, O= occasional, R= rare P=planted

Species	Common name	status	DAFOR
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple	very common	O
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	very common	O
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black Horehound	very common	O
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	very common	F
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch	very common	P
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	very common	O
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	very common	O
<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	Common Fumitory	common	O
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	very common	F
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens	common	O
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy	very common	F
<i>Iris foetidissima</i>	Stinking Iris	common	O
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort	very common	O
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	very common	LD
<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i>	Wood Forget-me-not	common	F
<i>Pentaglottis sempervirens</i>	Green Alkanet	common	O
<i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>	Fox-and-cubs	common	LD
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain	very common	F
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil	very common	F
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal	very common	F
<i>Prunus domestica</i>	Wild Plum	common	P
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry Laurel	Local	P
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg	a bramble	Local	LD
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel	very common	O
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock	very common	F
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock	common	O
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	very common	O
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort	very common	O
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Black Nightshade	common	F
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial Sow-thistle	very common	O
<i>Taraxacum</i> spp.	a dandelion	common	O
<i>Ulmus procera</i>	English Elm	common	O
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog-violet	common	O
<i>X Cupressocyparis leylandii</i>	Leyland Cypress	very common	P

