Mitigation Excellence

Land North of Bluebell Park, Emms Lane, Brooks Green

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Produced on behalf of Mr Daniel Wenman on 19/06/2019

Site Reference: EE-19-06130-01

Site Address: Land North of Bluebell Park, Emms Lane, Brooks Green

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SUMMARY

Mr Daniel Wenman commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Protected Species Assessment (PSA), for the proposed development to the north of Bluebell Park, Emms Lane, Brooks Green, West Sussex (Grid Reference: TQ 13075 25675). The aim of the assessment was to evaluate the type and quality of the habitat affected by the proposed development and to appraise the scope of potential ecological constraints, with emphasis on Protected Species. The PEA/PSA was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) on 18th June 2019.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has identified three habitat types within the site, however, only two within the Zone of Influence (ZI) of the development: 1) Improved Grassland; and 2) Bare Earth. Habitat is common and widespread, and each habitat is a typical example of its wider cohort. The ecological value of the site habitat, from a botanical and protected species perspective, is 'negligible'.

The development will necessitate the removal of all habitat within the ZI, however, the habitat within this area has been assessed to represent 'low ecological value'. There is no habitat that is suitable for protected species within the ZI therefore there is negligible potential for the development to infringe upon prevailing legislation. No habitat outside of the ZI will be removed.

Light pollution to the peripheral areas will be negligible due to the type of static caravan that will be used. It is therefore considered that the development will not indirectly impact protected species such as bats. Noise pollution will be very low as the units will not be occupied continuously and when they are occupied the residents will be over 55 years old. This demographic is perhaps considered the least impactful in terms of noise. The proposed access route on to the site will not require the removal of any trees and the hardstanding track will cover less than 20% of each of the adjacent tree's root protection area. The construction of the track can be completed using very little excavation, therefore, the roots to the trees will not be significantly impacted.

No further work for protected species will be necessary to support this planning application.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

1.1 Mr Daniel Wenman commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Protected Species Assessment (PSA), for the proposed development to the north of Bluebell Park, Emms Lane, Brooks Green, West Sussex (Grid Reference: TQ 13075 25675).

1.2 The aim of the assessment was to evaluate the type and quality of the habitat affected by the proposed development and to appraise the scope of potential ecological constraints, with emphasis on Protected Species.

1.3 The PEA was comprised of a baseline survey using the JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Survey protocol, where appropriate, and the surveyor's judgement to categorise the composition and extent of the existing site habitat. In addition, the PSA was undertaken to assess the potential for European and nationally protected species within the identified site habitat, in addition to any locally impacted areas.

Dates & Authorship

1.4 The PEA/PSA was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) on 18th June 2019.

Development Proposals

1.5 The development proposals consist of the construction of a series of static chalets/campervans (23 no.), with associated access, arranged around the central section of a well-tended field. The development entails the removal of a patch of short grassland of 'low ecological value'. The woodland around the site periphery will not be impacted by the development proposals.

Site Overview

1.6 The site was comprised of an improved grassland meadow, used to store heavy machinery, with the border comprised of semi-mature and mature pedunculate oak trees. The grassland had been kept short to ensure access to the stored vehicles was maintained and use of vehicles had left much of the southern section as bare earth. The wooded border was more or less continuous at the canopy layer and connects to ancient woodland to the east of the site.

Location Overview

1.7 The site is in Brooks Green which is a small village in rural West Sussex characterised by small irregular-shaped field demarked by long-established deciduous trees, predominately pedunculate oak *Quercus robur.*

Plate 1: The site in relation to the surrounding landscape (c. 350m radius)

1.8 The landscape to the east of the site is dominated by a large patch of ancient woodland (Madgeland Wood: 16.83ha, Ancient Replanted Woodland). The ancient replanted woodland connects to a larger patch of deciduous woodland, measuring approximately 50ha. The wooded boundary to the site connects well at the canopy layer to the woodland to the east and to further wooded field boundaries to the south, west and north.

Geology

1.9 The site bedrock is entirety comprised of the Weald Clay Formation which is characterised by dark grey thinly bedded mudstones and mudstones with subordinate siltstones.

2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The aim of the PEA was to:

1) Classify and document the habitat and plant communities on-site
2) Identify floral species within each habitat to aid classification
3) Appraise potential for Protected/Notable Species considered relevant for Planners
4) Recommend routes by which constraints can be investigated, circumvented or mitigated
5) Provide recommendations for ecological enhancement and/or compensation

2.1 This report details the potential ecological resource on-site positing specific locations, where possible.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken on 18th June 2019, wherein a Phase 1 Habitat Survey was conducted, using guidelines from *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit* (JNCC 2003).

3.2 The site habitat was classified and documented and the presence, or potential presence, of relevant Protected/Notable (P/N) flora/fauna was outlined. A summary description, with defining species abundance, of the site habitat was collected, following the Phase 1 Habitat Survey method, and presented in Section 4.0.

3.3 Target Notes, highlighting the location and defining criteria, of features of features relevant to the assessment were recorded, and have been laid out in Table No. 1 – Target Notes and Figure No. 1 – Site Habitat Plan.

3.4 All habitat on-site, and adjacent to site, were appraised for their potential for P/N fauna including, but not limited to, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Potential features and signs of use were identified and assessed for their importance for P/N spp and field signs, such as scat and hair, were considered. Stones, logs and debris were overturned, and any holes studied for recent activity, water bodies were recorded, where access allowed, within 500m of the proposed development.

3.5 A summary of the results, accompanied in large part by photographic evidence, and recommendations for further investigation are made in the following report.

Limitations

3.6 The site survey does not propose to present an exhaustive floral assemblage, as only one site survey visit was performed. Seasonal, and inter-year, variations may have inhibited the collation of such a list due to the growth habit of all species present. This does not affect the classification of habitat as the definitions offered by this survey protocol are broad.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Desk-Top Survey

4.1.1 The following section describes the ecological character of the development site, including relevant features from local areas, such as conservation sites and species records. Sites and habitat described here are not necessarily representative of the site ecology but are useful in characterising the local context.

Statutory Protected Sites

4.1.2 There are no statutory protected sites within 2km of the site. following table summarises the local Statutory Protected Sites, providing a description of the defining features and other salient information.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

4.1.2 The impact of the development is not predicted to extend beyond the site level. It is considered highly unlikely for a non-statutory site, such as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), to be impacted by the development proposals.

UK Priority Habitats

4.1.3 The scheme does not propose to remove UK Priority Habitat.

4.2 Field Survey

Site Habitat Assessment

4.2.1 The following habitat and Features of Interest (FoI) were recorded on-site/locally during the site survey visit. The site character has been described and the reasons for habitat classification given. Photographic evidence has been provided in Appendix No. 1 – Site Photographs; and a description of target notes has been provided in Table No. 1 – Target Notes.

4.2.2 Habitats within and adjacent to the development site area include:

- Improved Grassland
- Bare Earth
- Scattered Trees
- Deciduous Woodland

Improved Grassland & Bare Earth (refer to Photographs 1-5)

4.2.3 The site was dominated (>95%) by a moderately-sized field (1.6ha) comprised of improved grassland and bare earth. The grass had been cut short in a uniform swathe that offered very little structural diversity, the bare earth had been left after the removal of heavy machinery that had been stored in the field. The grassland areas were dominated by Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and Perennial Rye-Grass *Lolium perenne* with only a very small contribution of forb species.

Plate 2: Improved Grassland, Bare Earth & Wooded Boundary Vegetation

Scattered Trees & Deciduous Woodland (refer to Photographs 06-11)

4.2.4 The boundaries of the site were comprised of mature and semi-mature pedunculate oak *Quercus robur.* The canopy of the wooded boundary was continuous and represents a well-established feature of the local landscape that connects to ancient woodland and a large network of wooded field boundaries.

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Figure 1	Site Habitat Plan Rev00
Reference	EE-19-06130-01
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Table No. 1 – Target Notes

TN	Description	Species/Habitat	Potential	Photo No.
01	The main section of the site is short grassland and bare earth of 'low or negligible ecological value'	Grassland	Low	1-5
02	An access route will be constructed between two semi-mature pedunculate oak trees along the southern border. The access track will be constructed using very minimal digging and the hardstanding will cover less than 20% of the RPA of each tree. The impact will be 'low'.	Trees	Low	6
03	There is a dead tree along the eastern boundary with moderate bat roost potential. This area lies outside of the ZI so the impact will be negligible. This feature will not need to be surveyed as part of this planning application.	Bat	Moderate	7

Protected Species Assessment

4.2.5 The habitat at TN01 (refer to Figure 1 & Table 1) was not considered a suitable for protected species such as reptiles or great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*. The main section of the site represented 'low ecological value' and is where the 23 no. static caravans are proposed for construction.

4.2.6 TN2 marks the location of the proposed access from the field to the south on to the site. There is a gap in the trees measuring c. 6.75 metres which will mean that no trees will be removed to facilitate the site access. Once the track is constructed the hardstanding surface will occupy less than 20% of each tree root protection area. What is more, the construction can take place by digging to a depth of less that 200mm.

4.2.7 One tree around the periphery of the site, located at TN03, was noted to possess bat roost potential, however, this will not be impacted by the development proposals.

Photograph 1	
	**Site: Main Section** The photograph shows the southern section of the main section of the site (refer to TN01, Figure 1). This area had been used as storage for heavy machinery and the grass had been eroded. The habitat represented **'negligible ecological value'.**
Photograph 2	
	**Site: Main Section** The photograph shows the eastern section of the main section of the site (refer to TN01, Figure 1). This area had been used as storage for heavy machinery and the habitat had been eroded or maintained as short grass for ease of access. The habitat represented **'negligible ecological value'.**
Photograph 3	
	**Site: Main Section** The photograph shows the northern section of the main section of the site (refer to TN01, Figure 1). This area had been maintained as short grass. The habitat represented **'low ecological value'.**

Photograph 4	
	**Site: Main Section** The photograph shows the western section of the main section of the site (refer to TN01, Figure 1). This area had been used as storage for heavy machinery and the habitat had been eroded or maintained as short grass for ease of access. The habitat represented **'negligible ecological value'.**
Photograph 5	
	**Site: Main Section** The photograph shows the eastern section of the main section of the site (refer to TN01, Figure 1). The arrows indicate the Zone of Influence (ZI) for this development. The ecological impact of the development is not predicted to extend beyond this zone and into the peripheral areas. The habitat impacted represents **'low ecological value'.**
Photograph 6	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows the proposed location of the access from the southern field (refer to TN02, Figure 1). The track will be hardstanding laid on top of the existing earth with very minimal digging. The hardstanding will cover less than 20% of the RPAs of the adjacent trees.

Photograph 7	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows a dead tree located at TN03, Figure 1. There is moderate bat roost potential to this tree, however, it lies outside the ZI and will not need to be surveyed as part of this planning application.
Photograph 8	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows the southern boundary of the site. Light spill from the single-storey caravans will be minimal and will not illuminate the canopy layer. This feature represents 'moderate ecological value'. Importantly, this feature is outside of the ZI and will not be significantly impacted by the proposals.
Photograph 9	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows the eastern boundary of the site. Light spill from the single-storey caravans will be minimal as will noise from occupiers. This feature is outside of the ZI and will not be impacted by the development proposals.

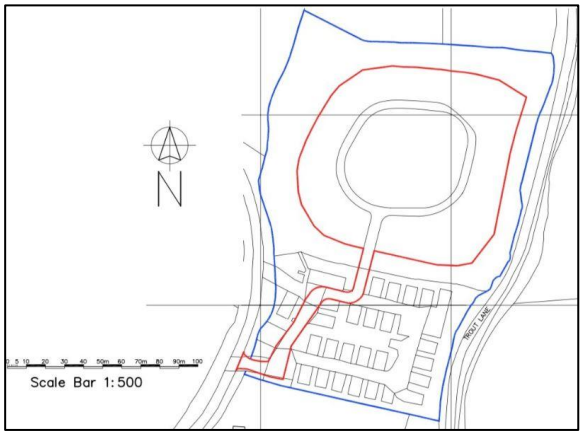
Photograph 10	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows the northern boundary of the site. Light spill from the single-storey caravans will be minimal as will noise from occupiers. This feature is outside of the ZI and will not be impacted by the development proposals.
Photograph 11	
	**Site: Periphery** The photograph shows the western boundary of the site. Light spill from the single-storey caravans will be minimal as will noise from occupiers. This feature is outside of the ZI and will not be impacted by the development proposals.

5.0 EVALUATION

Zone of Influence (ZI)

5.1 The Zone of Influence (ZI) is meant to include the area of land over which the potential impacts of the development should be considered. The ZI comprises the whole of the redline boundary but does not extend beyond this since the static caravans will emit very little light and disturbance from residents (over 55s only) will be negligible (see the images below).

Plate 3: Redline & Blueline Boundaries; Extent of Development Proposals; & Typical Static Caravan



Existing Habitat within ZI

5.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has identified three habitat types within the site, however, only two within the Zone of Influence (ZI) of the development: 1) Improved Grassland; and 2) Bare Earth.

5.3 Habitat is common and widespread, and each habitat is a typical example of its wider cohort. The ecological value of the site habitat, from a botanical and protected species perspective, is 'negligible'.

Ecological Impact Assessment

5.4 The development will necessitate the removal of all habitat within the ZI, however, the habitat within this area has been assessed to represent 'low ecological value'. There is no habitat that is suitable for protected species within the ZI therefore there is negligible potential for the development to infringe upon prevailing legislation. No habitat outside of the ZI will be removed.

5.5 Light pollution to the peripheral areas will be negligible due to the type of static caravan that will be used. It is therefore considered that the development will not indirectly impact protected species such as bats.

5.6 Noise pollution will be very low as the units will not be occupied continuously and when they are occupied the residents will be over 55 years old. This demographic is perhaps considered the least impactful in terms of noise.

5.7 The proposed access route on to the site will not require the removal of any trees and the hardstanding track will cover less than 20% of each of the adjacent tree's root protection area. The construction of the track can be completed using very little excavation, therefore, the roots to the trees will not be significantly impacted.

Conclusion

5.8 The site was very simple, and the development proposals are very low impact. No further work for protected species will be necessary to support this planning application.