Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP Biodiversity)

Produced for Inspired Villages

By Applied Ecology Ltd

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1 Introduction

Background

1.1 Applied Ecology Ltd (AEL) has been appointed by Inspired Villages to prepare a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP Biodiversity) to satisfy Condition 12 of a planning permission to construct a continuing care retirement community on land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath. The development area is referred to hereafter as "the Site" and is shown by **Figure 1.1**.

1.2 Planning permission for the development was granted by appeal (APP/23825/W/20/3262938), Local Planning Authority reference DC/19/1897.

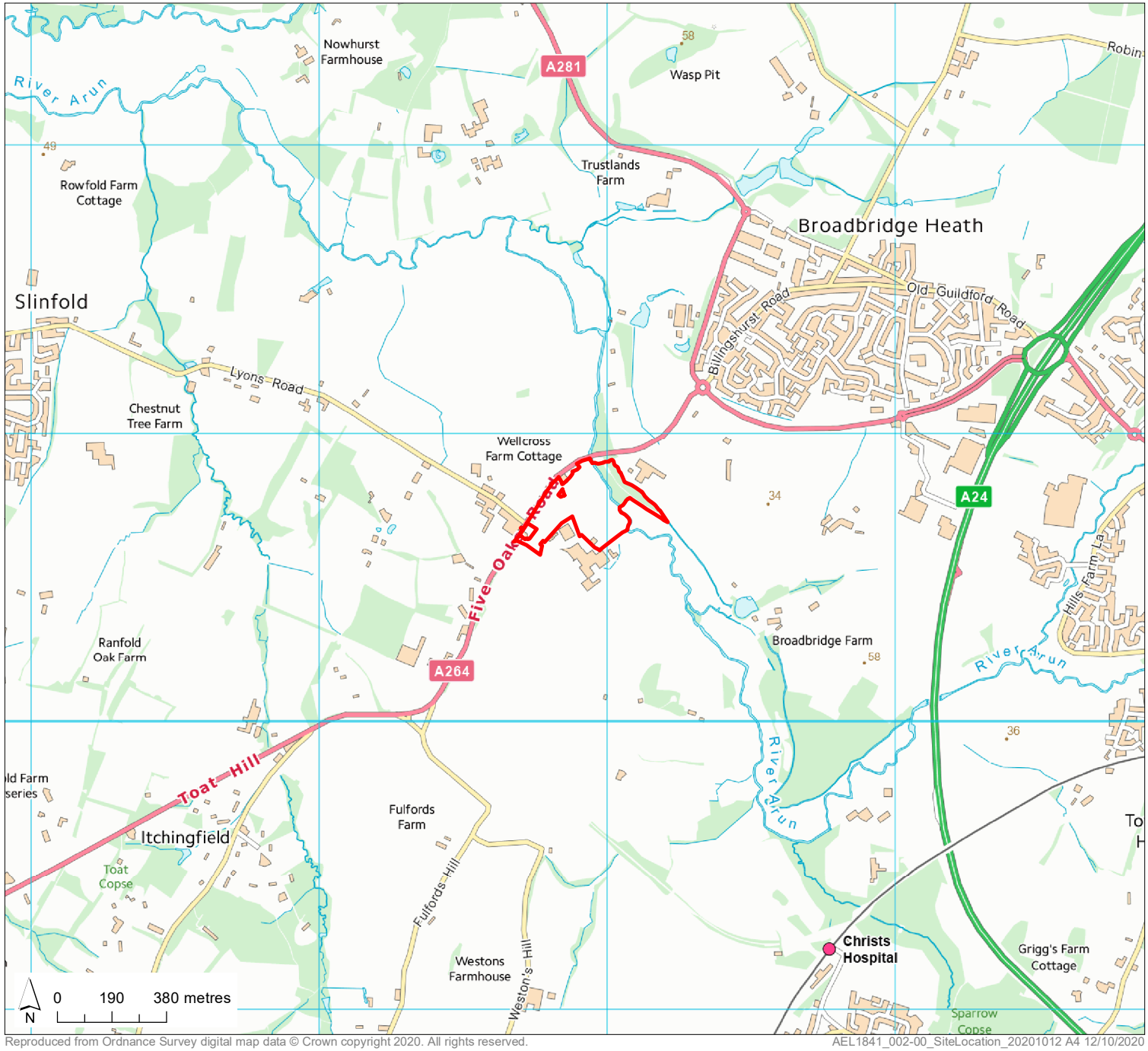
CEMP (Biodiversity)

1.3 Condition 12 of the planning permission states that:

1.4 "*Prior to commencement of development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP:Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following.*

a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority."



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AEL1841_002-00_SiteLocation_20201012 A4 12/10/2020

Broadbridge Heath

Site location

Site boundary

Figure 1

Map Scale @ A4: 1:20,000

Surveyed by: n/a	
Survey date: n/a	
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Applied Ecology Ltd

2 Potentially Damaging Construction Activities

2.1 This chapter identifies the construction activities that could damage habitats and species. It also provides a summary of the baseline conditions and highlights the sensitive ecological receptors that will be protected under the CEMP.

Potentially Damaging Activities

2.2 The potentially damaging activities identified in relation to development construction can be summarised as follows:

- Preparatory Site clearance including the removal of vegetation, which could result in killing and/or injuring protected animal species.
- Increased pollution risk associated with accidental spillage of fuels, oils, and increases in silt laden run-off and dust emission.
- Disturbance impacts on faunal species through noise, lighting, or vibration.

Sensitive Ecological Receptors

2.3 A baseline ecological assessment of the Site were undertaken by other ecological consultants to support the planning submission.

Designated Sites

2.4 The site is not covered by any wildlife site designation and does not occur close to any designated site. The proposed development was assessed as having no significant adverse impact on designated sites by the ecological assessment.

Habitats and Plants

2.5 The site was reported as being dominated by species poor semi-improved neutral grassland with small areas of tall ruderal vegetation, scrub and scattered trees. No invasive alien or plant species with high individual nature conservation value were present within the Site.

2.6 The habitats within the site are not deemed to be sensitive ecological receptors.

Fauna

2.7 A range of habitat and faunal surveys have been completed to inform the planning application, with specific ecological impacts of the development being reported in an

Ecological Impact Assessment report[1], with follow-up protected species surveys for reptiles[2], dormice[3] and bat activity[4].

2.8 A number of different protected faunal species were identified by the ecological appraisal as having theoretical potential to utilise the habitats within the Site for forage and shelter and were sensitive ecological receptors in the context of the CEMP. They were: **reptiles**, and **nesting birds**. **Dormice** were recorded as dispersing individual animals on land east of the River Arun outside of the core development area.

[1] BWB (August 2019) *Inspired Villages Group Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath – Ecological Impact Assessment*.
[2] BWB (December 2020) *Inspired Villages Group Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath – Reptile Survey*
[3] BWB (September 2020) *Inspired Villages Group Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath – Hazel Dormouse Survey 2019-2020*
[4] Applied Ecology Ltd (September 2020) *Broadridge Heath – Bat Activity Survey Report*

3 Protection and Risk Avoidance Measures

Pre-Clearance Site Meeting

3.1 An on-Site meeting will be held in advance of Site clearance to ensure all lead and key contractors are aware of the ecological constraints, the proposed ecological mitigation and impact avoidance measures, and the reporting protocol if ecological issues are identified as Site clearance and construction progresses.

Protection of Retained Trees and Adjoining Habitats

3.2 The position of the construction Site boundary will be marked out on the ground to ensure the extent of Site clearance is clear before works proceed.

3.3 Trees that are to be retained around the perimeter of the construction area, will be treated as ecological protection zones, and protected from accidental damage during Site clearance and construction through the installation of suitable fencing as considered necessary. Appropriate tree protection measures should be followed where necessary.

Species Mitigation and Impact Avoidance Measures

Nesting birds

3.4 Nesting bird activity within the Site is likely to be confined to scrub vegetation that provides suitable cover habitat over the key nesting period of March-August, inclusive.

3.5 To avoid the killing and/or injury of nesting birds, the clearance of cover vegetation and other suitable bird nesting habitat, will be completed outside of the bird breeding period during the window of September to February, or immediately following confirmation by an ecologist that breeding birds are absent from the area at other times.

3.6 Scrub will be cut back to ground level (but not dug up) and cuttings chipped on site – not burnt.

Dormice

3.7 Dormouse survey has verified that there is no resident dormouse population within the Site with only evidence of suspected dispersing dormice recorded on land to the east of the River Arun outside of the Core Site. **Figure 3.1** shows the location of land with potential to support dispersing dormouse.

3.8 A precautionary approach to tree and scrub removal on land areas where dormouse survey has verified dormouse presence will be implemented. The proposed approach follows the best practice timings and methods (two-stage winter / summer clearance for the removal of dormouse friendly habitats (woodland and scrub), as recommended by the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, and is consistent with typical EPSM licence requirements for this species



Key

Woodland and scrub vegetation located on east side of River Arun with potential to support dispersing dormice

Figure 3.1

3.9 Note that key stages of the clearance works will be supervised by a suitably experienced and dormouse licenced ecologist, and while the risk of finding dormice and/or their nests during Site clearance is considered very low, work would cease immediately if evidence of dormouse presence is found and the need for an EPSM licence would be reassessed.

Stage 1 – winter clearance

3.10 In advance of any tree or scrub vegetation clearance, a walkover of the land east of the River Arun will be completed by a dormouse licenced ecologist to identify, map and mark on the ground the location of any broad areas that have potential to support hibernating dormice such as root structures with voids, fissured coppice stools, rotten stumps, mammal burrow holes and other subterranean cavities. Particular care will be taken to avoid disturbance and/or damage to these areas during the clearance work, including directional tree felling and avoidance of other potential sources of ground disturbance.

3.11 All above ground vegetation, including trees and woody scrub, will be cut to a height of 15-30cm above ground-level during the winter period (1 November - end of March), to avoid both the bird nesting season and the majority of the period when dormice might be found in nests above ground. Any log piles or other surface features (i.e. deep leaf litter) will, where possible, be marked, retained and left undisturbed for the duration of the winter clearance work. Any features within dormice habitat area that are located along proposed haul routes or in areas where animals are at direct risk will be removed and raked through to check for hibernating dormice.

3.12 Clearance will be undertaken using hand operated machinery (i.e. a strimmer, clearing-saw, chainsaw or similar) and in a sensitive manner, to minimise the likelihood of disturbing or killing hibernating dormice. All cut material of a manageable size will be dragged (where necessary along designated drag routes to be hand-cleared in advance) on to open land away from the cleared habitat area where they will be chipped. The material may be chipped and spread in situ (i.e. within the cleared dormice habitat area) if a chipper can be positioned without damaging or disturbing areas identified as potentially suitable for hibernating dormice. The use of tracked machinery will be limited and restricted to habitat areas that have been checked and lack features of potential value to hibernating dormice. Any tree trunks and/or logs that are too large to drag out will be left in situ until after the Stage 2 dormouse clearance. Any cut material of a suitable size will be kept on site to be placed out as supplementary log pile habitats beyond the construction corridor.

3.13 If any hibernating dormice are disturbed accidentally during the winter vegetation clearance the animal(s) would be quickly wrapped up in its nest and replaced, with a light covering of leaves, moss or twigs. Alternatively, if the dormouse cannot easily be transferred to the nest location, the nest and its occupant will be wrapped in damp padding and transferred to a secure place just beyond the development area. This might include under the curve of a large log or between the roots of a tree or bush. A large roof tile or suitably supported paving stone would be placed to cover the nest. If an animal is aroused fully, it will be kept in captivity (following the guidelines set out in Chapter 7 of The Dormouse Conservation Handbook), and not returned until the summer, when it will be released within 100m of its origin.

3.14 Following the winter clearance any dormice hibernating within the cleared development areas will be encouraged to disperse into adjoining and unaffected habitat (with additional nest-boxes in place) following their emergence from winter hibernation.

Stage 2 – summer clearance

The second stage of the clearance will be completed between 1 May and end of September on habitat areas cleared the proceeding winter. All potential features of value to dormice, including tree stumps with complex root structures, rotten stumps, rot holes, mammal burrows and other potential hibernation sites will be identified and slowly taken apart by hand, where feasible, or with appropriate machinery, as required.

Reptiles

3.15 A reptile presence/absence survey of the Site was completed by BWB Consulting in September 2020[5] in accordance with best practice survey guidance using 150 artificial reptile refugia set out across the Site in potentially suitable grassland areas.

3.16 The survey verified the presence of a single juvenile grass snake *Natrix helvetica* within the proposed Core development site, and a single juvenile grass snake on land to the east of the River Arun. The majority of the core development area was horse grazed and unsuitable habitat for reptiles. The single juvenile grass snake in the Core site was present in a neglected former paddock area that was not grazed and supported a longer more rank grass sward.

3.17 A walkover survey of the Site by an experienced ecologist from Applied Ecology Ltd was completed in March and April 2022 to assess whether the suitability of the grassland areas within the Site had changed since the 2020 reptile survey. The 2022 survey found that the habitats had not changed significantly in extent, condition or distribution, and their likely value to reptiles was considered as reported in 2020[6].

3.18 **Figure 3.2** shows the parts of the Site that have the potential to support small numbers of grass snake based on the results of the previously referenced reptile survey in 2020 and follow-up habitat assessment completed in 2022.

Mitigation

3.19 Only habitat areas identified by **Figure 3.2** as having the potential to support grass snake will need to be subject to reptile mitigation provided the other grassland areas remain managed by grazing prior to site clearance and construction operations commencing.

3.20 Prior to construction starting, a reptile mitigation strategy based on progressive grassland cutting of habitat identified as potentially being suitable for grass snake will be implemented in suitable weather conditions during the reptile active months of mid-April to mid-October

[5] BWB (December 2020) *Inspired Villages Group – Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath – Reptile Survey 2020.* Document no. IVH-BWB-ZZ-RP-YE-0001_RTS

[6] Applied Ecology Ltd (19 April 2022) *Land at Wellcross Farm, Broadbridge Heath – Ecology Update*. A|EL1841_UpdateEcologyNote_v2.0_20220419



Key

Land areas with potential to support small numbers of grass snake

Figure 3.2

3.21 The land within the Core site with the potential to support reptiles as indicated by **Figure 3.2** will be subject to progressive grass cutting using a tractor mounted grass cutter with grass collection box or similar during the reptile active period (mid-April to mid-October).

3.22 The progressive grass cutting will only be completed in dry weather in air temperatures of 19^0C or higher to ensure that any grass snake present is fully active and can readily disperse.

3.23 The first cut (Day 1) will leave a sward height of 15 cm, with cutting taking place from south to north to encourage any reptiles present to move north towards the retained woodland northern edge of the Site. Grass cuttings will be removed from site.

3.24 The second cut (Day 2) also from south to north will leave a sward height of 8cm, and the third cut (Day 3) will be at ground level.

3.25 Following the Day 3 cut, the site will be checked by an ecologist and any remaining potential reptile refuge habitats dismantled by hand and/or with assistance from a small machine as necessary.

Badger

3.26 Prior to site clearance commencing the site will be subject to a walkover survey by an ecologist to check for the presence of badger setts. If an active sett[7] is found to be present, it will be retained with a suitable stand-off disturbance buffer around it until such time that it can be closed under licence from Natural England. The sett closure period is July-November.

3.27 A walkover survey of the Site was completed by Applied Ecology Ltd in March and April 2022. No badger setts or signs of badger were present within the Site.

3.28 All excavations and trenches will be will be covered with heavy boards at night or suitably ramped to prevent badgers and other wildlife (e.g. hedgehogs) becoming trapped.

[7] An active sett is defined as an underground mammal tunnel that trap camera monitoring of the entrance hole confirms has been accessed/used by a badger within a three week (21 day) period. A sett will be deemed no longer a badger sett if continuous trap camera monitoring confirms it has not been accessed/used by a badger over a continuous 21 day period

Ecological Watching Brief

3.29 A general ecological and protected species watching brief will be maintained during Site clearance and construction to identify any potential issues or constraints that arise during the works. If evidence of protected species, such as badger setts, are found work will cease immediately and specialist advice sought from a professional ecologist.

Pollution and Disturbance Control Measures

3.30 A range of best practice impact avoidance and control measures in relation to pollution and disturbance will be followed:

- Methods for filtering out solids before the discharge of any construction surface water runoff from the Site to the water system.
- Identifying and appropriately draining high risk areas during the demolition and construction stages of the works to prevent deterioration of water quality and avoid increasing flood risk.
- Safely storing any hazardous material or chemicals to prevent any spillages from contaminating the surface water runoff.
- Locating any Site compounds, vehicle parking, fuels, and hazardous materials away from any major flow paths and to prevent water pollution.
- Increased pollution risk associated with accidental spillage of fuels, oils, and increases in silt laden run-off and dust emission.

Programme Delays and Update Surveys

3.31 If there are significant delays to the current construction programme, the existing ecology baseline will need to be updated to ensure that the measures set out by the CEMP (Biodiversity) are still necessary and sufficient.

3.32 It is recommended that a walkover survey of the Site is completed each year to confirm that no significant changes to the habitat and likely protected species interests have occurred. If significant habitat changes have occurred, then follow-up protected species surveys may be required. In the absence of significant habitat change, protected species surveys would need to be updated every three years.

4 Timetable and Responsibilities

Timetable for Site Clearance and Construction

4.1 In summary, the key initial phases for ecology relate to Site clearance at the start of the Enabling Works, and particularly:

- Mitigation measures to avoid killing / injuring amphibians and reptiles;
- Precautionary measures to avoid killing / injuring nesting birds (clearance of trees/scrub) and checking for badger setts.

Responsible Persons

4.2 The **Development Construction Site Manager** (DCSM) will have overall responsible for implementing the CEMP: Biodiversity, including:

- Compliance with wildlife law.
- Compliance with planning conditions relating to nature conservation.
- Installation of physical protection measures.
- Implementation of sensitive working practices.

4.3 The DCSM will seek guidance and advice from a professional ecologist as necessary during construction.

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