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Mowbray East (Phase 2)

Ecology Survey Scoping Report

October 2023

CIEEM
REGISTERED
PRACTICE 2023-2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by L&G Strategic Lands Ltd (L&G) to provide ecological advice in respect to the mixed-use development within their site previously referred to as Land North of Horsham, now known as Mowbray.

The site benefits form Outline Planning Permission for a mixed-use strategic development to include housing (up to 2,750 dwellings), business park (up to 46,450 m^2), retail, community centre, leisure facilities, education facilities, public open space landscaping and related infrastructure (Planning Ref: DC/16/1677). There are numerous Conditions attached the OPP; the following report is concerned with Condition 13, which states:

Condition 13

Pre-commencement Condition: Prior to the submission of a Phase-wide Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (EMMP) for any Phase, or part thereof, up to date ecological surveys shall be carried out to provide up to date information regarding the potential of that Phase to support protected and notable species and inform the future design of measures that will be required to avoid, mitigate or compensate for impacts and to inform the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan for that Phase or part thereof. These surveys shall be completed by suitably qualified ecologist(s), recognised by a relevant professional body such as CIEEM, and in accordance with current survey guidelines. The scope of these surveys shall be agreed in advance with the LPA, and may include advanced surveys for rare bat species. The surveys shall be completed in accordance with the agreed scope prior to the submission of the Phase- Wide EMMP for that Phase, or part thereof, and the results and associated reports of the surveys appended to the EMMP for that Phase or part thereof.

As well as Condition 14:

Condition 14

Pre-commencement Condition: Prior to the submission of an Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (EMMP) with an application seeking approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to the planning permission, up to date ecological surveys shall be carried out to provide up to date information regarding the potential of the area covered by the Reserved Matters application to support protected and notable species and inform the future design of measures that will be required to avoid, mitigate or compensate for impacts and to inform the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan for that Reserved Matters application. These surveys shall be completed by suitably qualified ecologist(s), recognised by a relevant professional body such as CIEEM, and in accordance with current survey guidelines. The scope of these surveys shall be agreed in advance with the LPA, and may include advanced surveys for rare bat species. The

surveys shall be completed in accordance with the agreed scope prior to the submission of the EMMP for that Reserved Matters area and the results and associated reports appended to the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan for that Reserved Matters area.'

This report considers the above Conditions as far they relate to Phase 2 of the wider development but excluding the Employment Land.

Whilst both Condition 13 and 14 require the approval of the scope of the ecological surveys in advance, due to the original purpose timing of the submission of the RMAs, some surveys have been undertaken already, with others still ongoing. However, it is felt that sufficient opportunity is still available to the LPA, and their consultant, to comment on, and amend where necessary, the ecological surveys across the Phase 2 area.

2 PREVIOUS SURVEYS AND BASELINE

2.1 Previous Surveys

The Phase 2 area of land, like the rest of the wider Mowbray development, has been subject to numerous ecological surveys commencing with a Phase 1 survey in 2010, followed by a more structured series of surveys from 2014 onwards; these were principally used to inform the original OPP (Bioscan; various reports, Colin Plant Associates). A summary of the previous surveys is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of previous surveys

Survey	Date
Habitat – Phase 1 survey	2010, 2014, 2016, 2018
Great crested newt surveys	2014, 2016, 2018, 2019,
Bat Activity Surveys	2014, 2015
Bat tree roost assessment	2015
Dormouse	2014, 2018, 2019, 2020
Badger	2014, 2016, 2018
Reptiles	2014, 2015
Breeding birds	2014
Invertebrate	2015, 2016

Full details of the above surveys have previously been submitted to the LPA in support of the OP and are available on the Council website.

2.2 Baseline Conditions

A summary of the finding of the previous surveys is presented below.

Habitats
The Phase 2 land is characterised by arable fields in the main, delineated by native hedgerows, many of which are species rich. Bush Copse, which runs east to west more or less through the centre of the Phase is said to be ancient in origin, as is Castle Copse which is contiguous with part of the northern boundary of the Phase.

Chennel Brook also runs through the centre of the Phase, along the southern boundary of the bridletrack known as Bush Lane.

Great crested newts
The presence of great crested newts has been confirmed within two ponds inside the Phase 2 parcel boundary and within another three to the north of the parcel boundary, but within 250m. A maximum combined count of 11 newts was realised during the 2019 survey, suggesting there is a medium sized meta-population within Phase 2.

Reptiles
The reptile surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015 identified small populations of three reptiles across the wider site with slow worm, common lizard and grass snake. Within

the Phase 2 land, only slow worms and common lizard were encountered, at low numbers, to the north of Bush Lane only.

Bats

Activity Surveys

Transect and automated bat surveys have been undertaken by Bioscan within the application site in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2017. During these surveys, common pipistrelle was by far the most frequently recorded species, with fewer records of soprano pipistrelle, Myotis sp., noctule, serotine, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat, long-eared bat and barbastelle.

Activity surveys and static surveys have been undertaken each month during the bat active session (May to September) across the Phase 2 survey area in 2022. The result of the 2022 surveys were consistent with previous surveys.

Bat tree roost assessment

The trees across the wider site were assessed by Bioscan in in 2014, 2015 and 2016 for their potential to support bat roosts. This involved examining the trees from the ground using binoculars, and their potential to support roosting bats assessed based on the criteria present by BCT (2016).

Dormouse

Dormouse have not been encountered within the Phase 2 land itself during the previous surveys, but they have been noted from within the Sports Hub land which lies within 450m of the Phase 2 land.

Badgers

Several badger setts have previously been identified form within, and immediately adjacent to the Phase 2 land.

Breeding Birds

A breeding bird assemblage, typical of an urban fringe environment has been encountered with the wider Mowbray development.

3 PROPOSED SURVEYS

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The proposed surveys are not designed to re-assess the baseline information 'afresh'; sufficient data are available the previous 12 years of surveys to provide a comprehensive baseline. Instead, the aim of the update surveys is to assess whether there have been any significant changes in the ecological resource within the Phase since the original ES submission that could potentially result in the assessment presented in the ES, and by extension the approved mitigation, needing to be reviewed/ revisited.

It may also be necessary to take into account amendments and update to relevant legislation and policy.

3.2 Surveys

The following surveys have been or will be undertaken in 2022 and 2024prior to the commencement of works within Phase 2 or any sub-phase. The results will be used to inform the forthcoming Phase-Wide EMMP and future RMA-specific EMMPs.

Habitat Survey

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey has been undertaken across the Site in June 2022 with a further update surveys in September/October 2023, immediately prior to the submission of the first Reserved Matters Submission. The survey followed the methodology presented by the JNCC (2010). The Phase 1 technique aims to classify each habitat into categories based on the assemblage of plant species present, with the dominant plant species for each habitat being noted. In some cases, sub-divisions or modifications of the standard categories can be made where this is useful in providing further detail.

The results of the 2022 and 2023 surveys will be compared to the previous survey results presented in the ES and supporting documents. If significant changes in the habitats present are identified, then consideration will be given to undertaking more detailed habitat assessment.

Great crested newt

Updated surveys from both 2022 and 2023, undertaken by Thomson Environmental on behalf of Wates, who delivered the secondary school immediately to the of Phase 2, assessed Ponds P2, P18, P19, P30 and NP1. The surveys identified breeding populations within Ponds P2, P18 and P30 and NP1, with a combined maximum count of six, confirming that a low to medium meta-population is still present in and around the Phase 2 area.

The results of eDNA samples taken from Pond P1 in 2022 proved to be negative.

It is proposed to undertake update eDNA surveys of Pond P1 and P6 in 2024 to confirm the continued assumed absence of the species in these ponds.

Reptiles

An update reptile survey was undertaken across the Phase 2 and commercial land site in Spring 2022, employing the same methodology that has been used previously, which is based on the that presented by Froglife (1999). Refugia, in the form of heavy-duty roofing felts, measuring approximately 0.5m^2 were placed in targeted location around the Phase.

The refugia were inspected seven times during suitable weather conditions throughout the survey season.

It is believed the results from the 2022 surveys are still valid, hence no additional surveys are proposed.

Bats

The activity and static survey undertaken across the Phase in 2022 are still deemed to be valid, hence no update surveys are proposed.

Further bat tree roost assessments will be undertaken for each RMA as and when they any required following confirmation of the finalised tree removal plans.

Dormouse

A repeat dormouse survey was undertaken across the Phase 2, Sports Hub and Commercial land in 2022 using the dormouse nest tube methodology presented by Bright *et al* 2006. A total of 200 dormouse tubes were installed round the Site in early spring, then visits on several occasions until 20 points were achieved in line with the monthly score present in Table 2.

Table 2. Dormouse Scoring System

Month	Index of probability
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

The 2022 results are still deemed to be valid, hence no additional surveys are proposed.

Badgers

A badger update survey in spring 2022 and autumn 2023 found that badgers were still active throughout the Phase and neighbouring land, although none would directly impact by the proposed works.

In line with best practice, badger update survey will be ongoing through the lifetime of the development as badgers will frequently move setts or create new ones.