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FAO: Hadfield Developments UK Ltd [the Client] c/o: Windle Cook Architects 776 Newbold Road Chesterfield S41 9RP

# RE: Ecology Walkover and Assessment Note – Land at Stocks Lane, Barnsley

Further to recent correspondence, and your request for an Ecologist to conduct an Ecology site walkover survey and assessment at land at Stocks Lane, Barnsley, S75 2BL, please find enclosed details of the survey undertaken, the survey results and guidance.

# Background

In May 2024, Enzygo were commissioned by Hadfield Developments UK Ltd for an Ecology walkover survey and assessment in relation to proposals for a small residential development at land at Stocks Lane, Barnsley, S75 2DQ (central grid reference SE 33399 06532), located within the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council planning authority. It is understood that a site walkover is needed to assess current site conditions and habitats, potential for protected species, and to enable recommendation of appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. This is following a 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024 invalid application response received by the Client which states "a brief ecology report/note needs to be submitted with the application, detailing the findings of a walkover survey undertaken by a qualified ecologist."

This document presents details of a walkover survey and assessment undertaken by a suitably qualified Ecologist in order to confirm the potential impacts of the proposals on habitats, flora, and fauna, and to confirm any specific avoidance and mitigation measures which are required in accordance with BS42020:2013.

# Methodology

A walkover survey covering the area of the proposed residential development and immediately adjacent habitats was undertaken by a suitably qualified Ecologist in order to inform this assessment.

Survey Date: Friday 31st May 2024

Surveyor: Chris Schofield MSc BSc (Hons) ACIEEM [Principal Ecologist at Enzygo]

Weather Conditions: Dry and cloudy (80% cloud cover), with a light wind (Beaufort Scale 2) and 17°C.

The surveyor conducted a walkover survey of all areas within the redline boundary, and the accessible immediate area. The survey comprised recording broad habitats and vegetation assemblages in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UKHab, 2023), a general search for evidence of protected and notable species, as well as an assessment of the possibility of presence and habitat suitability for these species, particularly where uncommon or specialised habitats are present in accordance with current guidance (CIEEM, 2017).



No significant survey or assessment limitations were experienced with the survey conducted at an appropriate time of year, under appropriate conditions and all areas of the site fully accessible.

A brief desktop study has also been undertaken to identify any designated sites, Ancient Woodland, Priority Habitats etc. within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development (Magic Map, 2024). The March 2024 consultation response referenced above states that records from Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC) are unlikely to be required, but the requirement should be informed by the results of the walkover survey. Following the results of the walkover, it is not considered records from BBRC are necessary to inform this assessment.

# **Results and Assessment**

# Site Context and Summary

The survey area was found to comprise a small vacant plot of land off Stocks Lane, located within a suburban landscape approximately 1km west of Barnsley town centre. Aerial imagery indicates this area was historically garden habitat, however, appears to have been through successive clearance/management over the last 10 years. The site currently supports a combination of species-poor neutral grassland and tall ruderal herb vegetation, with localised dense bramble scrub vegetation, and a single small garage to the north. An access road to the rear of adjacent properties lies to the immediate east, a strip of amenity grassland and mature trees to the west, and semi-mature trees and scrub lie to the immediate north and south, with Stocks Lane beyond to the north, west and south.

### **Desk Study**

No International/European statutory designated sites for nature conservation (i.e. Ramsar, SPA, SAC) are present within a 5km radius of the site, and no Nationally statutory designated sites (e.g. SSSIs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are present within a 2km radius. No Priority Habitats or Ancient Woodland are indicated within a 500m radius (Magic Map, 2024).

# Habitats

The predominant habitat at the site is unmanaged species-poor neutral grassland with abundant tall ruderal herb vegetation, localised bare ground areas (circa 20% of area) and evidence of fly tipping and deadwood piles. The species assemblage is characterised by abundant Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), with frequent Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). This is a common and a typical species assemblage with no indicators of any species-rich or uncommon grassland types.

At the north of the site is a localised area of unmanaged scrub which is dominated by Bramble, with occasional Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Broad-leaved Dock, Common Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Mugwort (*Artemesia vulgaris*), Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and Sycamore saplings (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

Along the north boundary is a small garage with concrete and pebble-dash render walls and a flat corrugated, suspected asbestos, roof. This garage is a notably good condition with no signs of damage or gaps.



Insert 1: UK Habitat Classificaiton Map



# **Potential for Protected and Notable Species**

No evidence of protected species or any specific significant potential for protected species was identified at the site.

The small garage at the north of the site is entirely unsuitable and provides no notable potential for roosting bats. No trees within or immediately adjacent to the site provide suitable bat roosting potential and the significantly localised extent of habitats within the developed landscape do not provide or contribute to any notable foraging or commuting potential.

No evidence of Badger (e.g. setts, latrines, footprints) detected within the site or within an accessible 50m radius, and no notable extent of suitable foraging or sett creation potential.

In relation to Great Crested Newt (GCN), there are no ponds within the site or within an accessible 500m radius, and no extent of terrestrial habitats likely to attract dispersing GCN from the wider area, therefore the risk of GCN at the site is negligible.

The rough grassland, scrub and deadwood piles do provide a significantly limited extent of refuge and shelter for wildlife which may be present in the developed landscape such as common amphibians, small mammals and potentially individual numbers of common reptiles such as Slow-worm.



The scrub and deadwood piles also provide a significantly limited extent of suitable nesting for a restricted range of common nesting birds which are likely present in the local area.

Japanese Knotweed, an invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is present within the scrub at the north of the site and extending off-site to the north. No other Schedule 9 species detected within the site.

# **Avoidance and Mitigation Measures**

# **Boundary Trees**

Immediately beyond the north, west and southern boundaries are trees which provide a limited extent of green infrastructure and wildlife corridor function, and there is a risk these may be damaged during the construction phase. Boundary habitats should be protected throughout the construction phase in accordance with BS5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction.* Recommendations include installing and maintaining appropriate protection fencing. To minimise the potential for habitat degradation through excessive artificial lighting overspill, an appropriately designed lighting scheme should be implemented during construction and operation of the site, making use of suitable products such as directional, low-level, capped, screened and/or low-lux lighting.

# Nesting Birds

In order to avoid any offence in respect of nesting birds, it is recommended that site clearance and any proposed cutting back of overhanging trees is either conducted outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) or is conducted following a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified Ecologist or Ecological Clerk of Works.

Given that birds can commence nesting at any time during the breeding season, any absence of nesting birds confirmed by a nesting bird check becomes invalid after a few days. It is therefore recommended that any required nesting bird check is conducted immediately prior (i.e. a day or two) the vegetation clearance, or with an Ecologist present directly supervising.

In the event an active nest is detected or suspected, all works in the area should cease immediately and an Ecologist contacted for advice. A species-appropriate protective buffer zone (to be confirmed by a suitably qualified Ecologist), would be established around the nest, and guidance will be given on the status of the nest (e.g., age of the chicks) to provide an estimate of when the chicks will have fledged, and the nest will be no longer active. A further check would then be required by a suitably qualified Ecologist to confirm the nest in no longer active prior to the recommencement of works.

In addition, as best practice, a precautionary approach should be undertaken with all contractors aware of the potential presence of nesting birds and the protocol should an active nest be detected.

# Common Reptiles and Other Notable Species

The construction phase should implement a series of best practice precautionary measures to minimise the risk of killing/injury of wildlife such Slow-worm and Hedgehog. This should include avoiding leaving open any pits or trenches in which wildlife may become trapped. Any trenches or pits in which wildlife may become trapped should either be covered, infilled, or a suitable means of escape provided (e.g., plank of wood) overnight. Any wildlife discovered at the site should be either allowed to disperse into offsite areas of relocated by hand.



#### Japanese Knotweed

It is recommended that a specialist invasive species contractor is commissioned to produce an invasive species treatment and eradication plan to ensure that the works do not lead to the spread of Japanese Knotweed in the wild.

# **Biodiversity Enhancements**

In order to demonstrate overall enhancement for biodiversity at the site, it is recommended that the proposed landscape scheme incorporate a range of native species, and other flowering and fruiting species which are known to be of value to wildlife.

In addition, in accordance with *BS 42021:2022 Integral Nest Boxes* at least one new bird nest box per plot should be incorporated into the developed site. Suitable box types considering the site location and bird species likely present in the local area include the Vivara Pro Woodstone House Sparrow Nest Box, Woodstone Build-in Swift Nest Box, and the Schwegler Type 24 Brick Nest Box (or similar as approved if unavailable), as shown in Insert 2 below.

### Insert 2: Recommended Bird Boxes



Vivara Pro Woodstone House Sparrow Nest Box, Woodstone Build-in Swift Nest Box, and Schwegler Type 24 Brick Nest Box (from left to right).

Bird boxes should be positioned at the wall tops in a sheltered location beneath the eaves and in a location away from notable sources of disturbance such as security lighting and windows. Bird boxes should also avoid south-facing elevations as these can receive excessive sunlight and cause chicks to overheat in the box.

The scheme also presents the opportunity to incorporate two integrated bat roost boxes such as the Vivara Pro Build-in Woodstone Bat Box (or similar as approved), as shown in Insert 3 below. These boxes should be positioned at the wall tops in a sheltered position below the eaves, in a location where a clear flight path to the box is provided, and ideally face on to suitable bat habitat such as off-site trees and new landscape planting.





# Vivara Pro Build-in Woodstone Bat Box

No other specific avoidance or mitigation measures in relation to Ecology are required or recommended in relation to the new residential development.

I trust this note satisfies your requirements.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

C. Schosield

Chris Schofield – Principal Ecologist Enzygo Ltd







Bramble Scrub vegetation



Neutral Grassland and Off-site trees to the west



Fly-tipping/deadwood pile at the centre of the site



Small garage to the north

Japanese Knotweed at the north of the site