



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

**P. & D.M.J. Atkinson & Son
Ltd, Aldi Stores Ltd and
Dearne Estates Ltd**

Land to the north of Bamsley Road
Highgate
Goldthorpe
South Yorkshire
S63 9LA

**URBAN
GREEN**

arboriculture
landscape
ecology

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1. Summary

- 1.1.1. Urban Green was commissioned in August 2014 to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of a proposed development site at Land to the north of Barnsley Road, Highgate, Goldthorpe, South Yorkshire.
- 1.1.2. The survey was carried out on the 8th August 2014. This report details the findings of the survey and provides an ecological baseline of the habitats present, an assessment of the likelihood of protected or otherwise notable species to be present and indication of the likely impacts of the proposals on protected species and biodiversity.
- 1.1.3. The majority of the site consists of recently used pasture fields bounded by hedgerows.
- 1.1.4. Some small areas of Japanese Knotweed were identified on site, a plan for control, eradication and management of the knotweed will be required in order to prevent the spread of this invasive species.
- 1.1.5. No further detailed or protected species surveys have been recommended on site.
- 1.1.6. Any trees or hedgerows that will be removed have potential to be used by nesting birds. Given the protection afforded to nesting birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) where it is an offence to: intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird; intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; or intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird, all vegetation removal should take place outside of the bird breeding season (which generally extends from March to August). If this is not possible, then a check for nests immediately prior to removal should be carried out by a qualified ecologist. If nests are found, they should be adequately protected until breeding has finished and the nest is no longer in use.

2. Introduction

2.1. Instructions

- 2.1.1. We have been instructed by Planning Potential on behalf of P. & D.M.J. Atkinson & Son Ltd, Aldi Stores Ltd and Dearne Estates Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for a proposed development site at Barnsley Road, Goldthorpe, South Yorkshire.
- 2.1.2. This report details the ecological baseline of the site in order to inform where there is potential for protected, or otherwise notable, species and/or habitats and to provide an assessment of the likely impacts on protected species and biodiversity.

2.2. Site description

- 2.2.1. The proposed development site (grid reference SE 4499504271) lies to the west of Goldthorpe centre. The site is set within a semi-rural landscape on the edge of a low density residential area, bordered by the A635 to the north, residential housing to the east, Barnsley Road to the south and the Hollygrove Roundabout to the west. The general habitats within the site boundary comprise pasture fields surrounded by hedgerows and scattered trees.

2.3. Legislation and planning policy

- 2.3.1. Certain habitats and species, including bats, nesting birds, reptiles and amphibians are subject to protection as laid out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 while badgers are afforded protection by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 2.3.2. Under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 it is against the law to remove or destroy certain hedgerows without permission from the local planning authority. The local planning authority is also the enforcement body for offences created by the Regulations.
- 2.3.3. According to the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, and promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. Local planning authorities should also aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by encouraging opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided through locating an alternative site with less harmful impacts, adequately mitigated, or, as a last result, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- 2.3.4. In addition, biodiversity is an important factor when considering proposed developments, in accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 states that

"every public body must, in exercising its functions have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity" and Section 41 of the NERC Act requires that all Priority Species and Habitats identified within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and relevant Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are considered as biodiversity conservation priorities.

2.4. Personnel and quality assurance

- 2.4.1. The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken on 8th August 2014 by Rob Wreglesworth, who is an experienced ecologist, who is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. All fieldwork is carried out in accordance with current best practice guidelines (JNCC 2010).

2.5. Aims of report

- 2.5.1. To undertake a desk-based study of the proposed development site in order to establish the presence, or likelihood of presence, of protected species or habitats of importance;
- 2.5.2. To describe habitats, flora and fauna, by carrying out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site, with particular attention given to features that have the potential to support protected or otherwise notable species;
- 2.5.3. To identify the biodiversity value of the site, assess the likely impacts of the proposed development on protected species and biodiversity, to inform the need for further surveys and to highlight any relevant ecological constraints to development or opportunities for nature conservation enhancement in line with relevant UK and European legislation.

3. Methods

3.1. Desk-based study

3.1.1. A desk-based study was undertaken in order to assist with the field survey and to establish the presence of protected sites nearby.

3.1.2. The MAGIC website (<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>) which provides information covering rural, urban, coastal and marine environments across Great Britain was accessed for information on UK and European protected and important sites, habitats and species. The following features were searched for:

- Nature reserves and country parks
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)
- Internationally protected sites (e.g Ramsar, Special Protection Areas [SPA], Special Areas of Conservation [SAC]).
- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats and Species

3.1.3. The following sources were also reviewed:

- Ordnance Survey map for ponds or waterbodies within 500m of the site.
- Protected Species data from the National Biodiversity Network

3.2. Field study

3.2.1. The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out on 8th August 2014 and involved undertaking a detailed walkover across the site. Observations of flora and fauna were noted, in addition to an assessment of the potential habitats for protected species.

3.2.2. The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC 2010). The extent of each habitat was mapped (Appendix A). Target notes and photographs (Appendix B) have been included to provide an indication of the nature conservation interest and a clearer picture of existing conditions.

3.3. Evaluation methods

3.3.1. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (IEEM 2006) and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (IEEM 2012) are used as a basis to evaluate the nature conservation value of the site and features of ecological importance. These guidelines identify important ecological resources such as protected sites, species populations and habitats and attributes levels of importance at the following scales:

- International
- National

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- Regional
- County/Metropolitan
- District/Borough
- Parish/Neighbourhood
- Negligible

3.3.2. In addition, habitats and species are evaluated in terms of Biodiversity Priority Habitats and Species as listed in the UK BAP and relevant Local BAPs.

3.3.3. The potential impacts of land use change on the nature conservation of the site, existing habitats and species are assessed using these criteria, where applicable, and professional judgement.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions

4.1. Statutory and non-statutory protected sites and other features

- 4.1.1. There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary.

4.2. Plants and habitats

Field survey

- 4.2.1. The habitats found on and close to the site have been described according to Phase 1 Habitat descriptions. The habitat map is given in Appendix A and target notes and photographs are presented in Appendix B.

Semi-improved grassland

- 4.2.2. The majority of the site consists of improved pasture which appears to have been grazed by livestock in recent years. Dominant species include cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, with frequent creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, greater plantain *Plantago major*.

- 4.2.3. There are some areas of thicker ephemeral on the field margins species include Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*, Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*.

Hedgerows and Scattered Trees

- 4.2.4. The northern, western and southern boundaries are bounded by species poor native hedgerows with scattered trees, species include Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Field Maple *Acer campestre* and Elder *Sambucus sp.*

Japanese Knotweed

- 4.2.5. Two small stands of Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* were located on site. For locations see target notes on map in Appendix A.
- 4.2.6. Japanese knotweed is a non-native invasive plant that outcompetes native plants and animals and spreads through its crown, rhizome (underground stem) and stem segments. The stands of Japanese knotweed must be fully eradicated from site prior to the commencement of any construction-related works. A method statement for eradication of Japanese knotweed should be produced and adhered to. Japanese knotweed can take one to three years to eradicate, depending on the eradication methods used. Japanese knotweed is listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) making it an offence under Section 12 (2) (a) to the Act to 'plant or otherwise cause such species to grow in the wild'.

4.3. Birds

Field survey

- 4.3.1. The hedgerows and scattered trees on site provide good habitat for nesting birds. The following species were recorded on site during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey:

- Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

4.4. Bats

Field survey

- 4.4.1. There are no buildings on site.
- 4.4.2. There are a small number of small young and semi-mature trees on site, however after detailed inspection from the ground no tree had any features suitable for use by roosting bats.

4.5. Badgers

Field survey

- 4.5.1. No evidence of badgers was found on site and no evidence of setts were found on the site or in the surrounding areas.

4.6. Reptiles

Field survey

The site does not provide habitat suitable for supporting reptiles due to a lack of foraging, hibernation and refuge habitats.

4.7. Amphibians

Field survey

- 4.7.1. There are no ponds or areas of standing water suitable for breeding amphibians on site. There are no ponds within 500m of the site boundary according to OS maps and from observing aerial imagery.

5. Description of Proposals

- 5.1.1. The proposal is for a food store and associated car parking in the western section of the site with residential housing in the eastern section.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Statutory and non-statutory protected sites and other features

- 6.1.1. There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary.

6.2. Plants and Habitats

- 6.2.1. All habitats on site are common and widespread and are not classed as notable or important habitats in their own right. None of the habitats support notable or *protected plant species and the habitats present are not deemed to be valuable habitats*. The loss of these habitats would not be significant in ecological terms, other than the effects on species they support, which are described below.
- 6.2.2. Two small stands of Japanese Knotweed were found in the south eastern corner of the site. A plan for Japanese Knotweed management and eradication plan will need to be prepared in order to prevent the spread of the species during construction works.

6.3. Birds

- 6.3.1. The proposals are likely to result in a small reduction of foraging resource for species such as swallow. The proposals, in absence of mitigation, are expected to have a negligible/minor negative effect on nesting birds.
- 6.3.2. Any trees or hedgerows that will be removed have potential to be used by nesting birds. Given the protection afforded to nesting birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) where it is an offence to: intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird; intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; or intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird, all vegetation removal should take place outside of the bird breeding season (which generally extends from March to August). If this is not possible, then a check for nests immediately prior to removal should be carried out by a qualified ecologist. If nests are found, they should be adequately protected until breeding has finished and the nest is no longer in use.

6.4. Bats

- 6.4.1. All British bats and their roosts are also protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to bats and their roost, making it an offence to deliberately/intentionally or recklessly: kill, injure or take a bat; damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not); or disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.
- 6.4.2. No buildings or trees on site were found to have any features suitable for housing roosting bats **therefore detailed bat surveys (tree inspection and activity surveys) are not required.**

6.5. Other animal species

- 6.5.1. There is no evidence to suggest that badgers are present on site or within the local area. Therefore, no further survey regarding badgers is required.
- 6.5.2. No signs of reptiles were noted during the survey and the site does not provide suitable reptile habitat. It is highly unlikely that the proposals will affect any local reptile population.
- 6.5.3. In England, all native species of reptile are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to intentionally kill or injure any species. In addition, smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) are listed as European Protected Species (EPS) under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010. Common lizard is a LBAP species while slow-worm, grass snake, common lizard and adder are all Priority species.
- 6.5.4. No further survey for reptiles is required.
- 6.5.5. There are no waterbodies within 500m of the development site boundary.
- 6.5.6. Great crested newt is a LBAP species while both great crested newt and common toad are Priority species. Great crested newts are also protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to great crested newts and their places of shelter, making it an offence to deliberately/intentionally or recklessly to: kill, injure or capture a great crested newt; damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; disturb great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose; take or destroy the eggs of a great crested newt; or possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt.

7. References

IEEM (2006). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management www.ieem.net.

IEEM (2012). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management www.ieem.net.

JNCC (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, UK.

Appendix A – Phase 1 Habitat Map

Appendix A shows an illustrative map of the Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out during the site walkover. The habitats are plotted on site using ArcMap GIS software and are coded to the official JNCC symbology provided for use with GIS software



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, IGN, AerGRID, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Key

- Target Note
- #### Fence
- ||||| Hedge with trees
- Neutral Grassland (semi-improved)
- ⊠ Scattered Scrub



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Project
Land to the north of Barnsley Road
Goldthorpe
Description
Habitat Map

Scale	Drawn By	Date
NTS	RW	12/08/2014

Job number	Drawing number	Revision
10702	10702.HABITAT	N/A

Appendix B – Target Notes and Photographs

General Site Photos



Target note 1

The first stand of Japanese Knotweed appears to have been recently treated. This will need further treatment and management to ensure full eradication.



Target note 2

A second stand of Japanese Knotweed seedlings was found on the southern boundary.

