

Ecology Position Statement

Project: Land at Drake Way BMW Site, Reading

TN1: Ecological Appraisal

Date: January 2019

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. Aspect Ecology has been commissioned by Diageo Pension Trust Ltd in respect of ecological matters at the site, located immediately west of Drake Way, Reading (see Plan 5339/ECO1).
- 1.2. The site is proposed for creation of a car park (see Proposed Site Plan attached) and ecological information is therefore required to inform the planning application.
- 1.3. This technical note provides a summary of the findings of the ecological survey and appraisal undertaken, and sets out any identified relevant ecological issues and constraints at the site, in order to inform the development proposals.

2. Site Description

- 2.1. The site is located to the west of Drake Way in Reading. The site boundaries are demarcated by closeboard fencing, beyond which lies areas of hardstanding in the form of existing car parking, pavement and roads on all sides.
- 2.2. The site itself comprises an area of semi-improved grassland, along with very occasional scattered scrub.

3. Survey Methodology

Desktop Study

- 3.1. A review of freely available background information was undertaken, in order to identify any known ecological constraints to the proposals. The information reviewed included online information available from Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database, the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Hunt website and Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre's (TVERCs) '*Local Wildlife Site (LWS) 'Living List' and Locations*'.
- 3.2. Given the nature and setting of the site and the survey work undertaken, the site is considered unlikely to support or conceal any use by protected, rare or notable species, such that obtaining further background information is not considered necessary.

Survey Work

- 3.3. The site was surveyed on 9 March 2017, in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the land contained within the boundaries of the site and to identify the main habitats and features present.
- 3.4. The site was surveyed based on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology¹, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail through Phase 2 surveys. This method was extended, in line with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (GPEA)², to include recording details of notable or protected species present, or habitats that may have the potential to support notable or protected species.
- 3.5. Using the above method, the site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified.

4. Survey Results and Discussion

Ecological Designations

- 4.1. The nearest statutory designation to the site is Pearman's Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located approximately 2.5km south west of the site, whilst the nearest European-level designation is Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) located approximately 8.1km south east of the site. In addition, based on a review of freely available information from TVERC, it is understood that the River Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located approximately 90m west of the site.
- 4.2. At these distances and given the nature of the proposals for a new car park, no adverse effects as a result of the proposed development are anticipated on these, or indeed any other statutory or non-statutory designations.

Habitats

- 4.3. The site comprises an area of semi-improved grassland and occasional areas of scattered scrub (see Plan 5339/ECO1).
- 4.4. The semi improved grassland within the site appears to be subject to management in the form of mowing, albeit did not appear to have been recently mown at the time of survey, comprising a sward height of approximately 10-20cm. The sward was recorded to be dominated by grass species, along with a relative low herb/ruderal comprising common and widespread species and patches of bare ground/debris (e.g. heras fencing, wooden fencing etc). Occasional areas of scattered scrub were also recorded within the site in the form of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and *Buddleja* sp.
- 4.5. The habitats within the site comprise common and widespread species of limited botanical value, which are isolated in nature being surrounded by areas of existing hardstanding and buildings. Accordingly, the habitats within the site are not considered to form important

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) "Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit."

² Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) (2017) "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal"

ecological features outside the site context and loss of these habitats is not considered to pose a constraint to the proposals.

Faunal Species

4.6. A summary of the potential for protected and notable faunal species to be present within the site is set out below:

- **Bats.** No buildings or trees are present within the site and therefore no bat roosting opportunities are afforded by the site. In terms of foraging/commuting bats, save for very occasional areas of scrub, no areas of dense or linear vegetation are present within the site, whilst the site is isolated from other areas of value to bats by surrounding areas of buildings and hardstanding.
- **Badger.** The site may provide minor opportunities for Badger *Meles meles*, although the value of the site is limited by the size and isolated nature. In any event, no evidence of Badger was recorded within the site.
- **Other mammals.** The site may offer very limited opportunities for Priority Species Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, along with common mammal species such as Fox *Vulpus vulpus* and Rabbit *Orytolagus cuniculus*. However, no evidence for the presence of these species was recorded within the site, whilst the value of the site is further limited by the nature of the site being fenced off and isolated from other areas of suitable habitat by surrounding buildings and hardstanding.
- **Birds.** The site may offer limited foraging opportunities for common bird species, as well as very limited opportunities for nesting birds afforded by areas of scrub.
- **Great Crested Newt and Other Amphibians.** No ponds have been identified within 250m of the site, although an ornamental water feature has been identified, located approximately 170m north east of the site. This water feature supports negligible vegetation and is surrounded by areas of buildings and hardstanding, including roads, such that Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* are highly unlikely to be present. Further, the water feature is isolated from the site by buildings and hardstanding, such that in the highly unlikely event that Great Crested Newts are present, they would be highly unlikely to make use of the terrestrial habitats within the site.
- **Reptiles.** The site is dominated by grassland, which may provide limited opportunities for reptile species. However, the potential value of the site for common reptile species is limited by its size and isolated nature, being fenced and surrounded by buildings and hardstanding on all sides.
- **Invertebrates.** The site is dominated by grass-dominated semi-improved grassland which provides minor opportunities for common invertebrate species.

- 4.7. In summary, the majority of the site is of limited value for faunal species, being dominated by semi-improved grassland and isolated from other habitats of value to faunal species by the surrounding areas of buildings and hardstanding. On this basis, the habitats are not considered to be ecologically valuable to protected/notable species outside the context of the site and are therefore not considered to pose a constraint to the proposals.
- 4.8. Nevertheless, given that minor opportunities for nesting birds are afforded by scrub within the site, in order to ensure that any nesting birds are suitably safeguarded and avoid any potential offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), recommendations are set out below.

5. Recommended Mitigation and Enhancements

Mitigation Measures

- 5.1. On the basis of the survey work undertaken, the habitats within the site do not form important ecological features outside the site context, whilst opportunities for faunal species (including protected or notable species) are very limited.
- 5.2. Accordingly, suitable mitigation and compensation measures are limited to the following:
 - **MM1 – Nesting Birds.** In order to ensure that any nesting birds are suitably safeguarded and avoid any potential offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is recommended that any clearance of suitable nesting habitats be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. outside of March to August inclusive). Should this not be possible, areas of scrub to be removed should first be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist in order to confirm the absence of any active nests within three days prior to removal. Any active nests identified would need to be retained and protected until the end of the nesting season or until the birds have fledged.

Ecological Enhancements

- 5.3. National planning policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. Opportunities for meaningful ecological enhancements are somewhat limited due to the existing setting and location of the site along with the proposed use as a car park.
- 5.4. Nevertheless, recommendations are set out below, which would provide enhancement measures:
 - **EE1 - New Planting.** The nature of the proposals for a car park are such that limited areas are available for landscaping, albeit an area of shrub planting is proposed along the eastern site boundary (see attached plan). As such, where possible, it is recommended that any new shrub planting use native species of wildlife value. Fruit bearing species are also preferable to provide a foraging resource for mammals and birds. Further, it is recommended that any management of vegetated areas be directed to benefit wildlife and the use of pesticides or herbicides minimised wherever possible.
 - **EE2 – Invertebrate Boxes.** It is recommended that invertebrate boxes are incorporated into areas of new shrub planting within the site to provide opportunities for invertebrates throughout the year.

6. Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1. The site is dominated by semi-improved grassland and occasional areas of scrub. The habitats present are not considered to form important ecological features and therefore the loss of these habitats is not considered to pose a constraint to the proposals.
- 6.2. The habitats within the site offer very limited opportunities for protected or notable species and no evidence for any use by protected, rare or notable species was recorded. Nevertheless, areas of scrub may provide very minor opportunities for nesting birds and precautionary safeguards in respect of scrub clearance are set out in order to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- 6.3. Given the nature of the proposals for a car park, no effects as a result of the proposed development are anticipated on any other statutory or non-statutory designations.
- 6.4. In summary, subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm to biodiversity, whilst the opportunity exists to provide enhancements for biodiversity at the site through native planting and provision of invertebrate boxes.



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Semi-improved Grassland
 - Scattered Scrub
 - Closeboard Fence

aspect ecology

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Land at Drake Way,
BMW Site, Reading
Habitats and Ecological Features

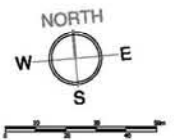
PROJECT
TITLE
DRAWING NO.
REV.
DATE





KEY:

- 1 SECURITY HOOPS AT 1400MM CENTRES
- 2 PLANTED VERGE CONSISTING OF LOW LEVEL SHURB PLANTING AND GROUND COVER
- 4 6M LIGHTING COLUMNS
- 5 TELESCOPIC BOLLARDS
- 6 SURFACE OF ROAD FORMED FROM TARMAC
- 7 SURFACE OF DISPLAY BAYS FORMED FROM PERMEABLE BLOCK PAVING IN CHARCOAL FINISH
- 8 DRAINAGE CHANNEL
- 9 6M X 3M DISPLAY SPACES



Project
 28214 Land At Drake Way
 BMW Site Reading
 Drawing Title
 Proposed Site Plan

Date Mar. 2018	Scale 1:250	Drawn by RP	Check by NC
Project No 28214	Drawing No PP-003	Revision	-

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