

Reading and Caversham Flood Risk Management Scheme

Annex 1 Additional Phase 1 Habitat Survey: Lowfield Farm

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This Annex should be read in conjunction with the *Thames Appraisal Package – Caversham Extended Phase 1 Survey* (CH2M, 2018), ENV0000112C-CH2-000-000-RP-EN-0001. Phase 1 habitat mapping associated with this Annex is provided in Figure A1 (ENV0000112C-CH2-000-000-DR-EN-0010).

Due to access issues, an area of land located to the northeast of the proposed flood alleviation scheme in Caversham, Berkshire, was not included in the original extended Phase 1 surveys. Lowfield Farm is located south of the Henley Road, A4155, and the end of Nire Road, where one of the previous surveys finished (OSGR: SU 730 751). The survey was undertaken by two experienced ecologists on the 23rd March 2018. The field survey was conducted following the methodology given in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010).

The habitats were classified and mapped, and dominant plant species were recorded. Nomenclature for plant species follows that of Stace (2010). Note was taken of any signs of fauna and any evidence of, or potential for the presence of, protected animals was recorded within and adjacent to the study area in accordance with the guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2013).

The Evaluation and Limitations of the surveys, along with Legislative, Planning and Biodiversity Action Plan Context are noted within the report of the Extended Phase 1 Survey¹ to which this Annex relates.

Habitats and Flora

The distribution of habitats present within the survey area is shown in Figure A1, with related photographs presented in Table A1. During the Phase 1 habitat survey, habitats and signs of fauna were recorded. The majority of these are detailed within the main Phase 1 report; those that were not previously identified are listed below:

¹ *Thames Appraisals – Caversham Extended Phase 1 Survey – ENV0000112C-CH2-000-000-RP-EN-0001*

Hedgerows with trees – species poor

The southern edge of the survey area consisted of hedgerows with trees, used as a site boundary (TN 5, 12). Consisting primarily of hawthorn, but with occasional alder, blackthorn and ivy.

All of these hedgerows are potentially suitable for; birds, invertebrates, mammals and reptiles. The scattered trees to the north of the survey area was suitable for breeding birds, however, were deemed too young to support roosting bats.

Marshy Grassland

An area of marshy grassland was noted west of the survey area, between the stream and the houses (TN 11). This area is level and, though the ground was dry during the survey, the vegetation mainly consisted of a tall sedge species.

Fauna recommendations

The majority of species, along with the legislative protection of each, can be found within the main report. No new protected species were noted during the survey, which have not previously been detailed in the original report. Nevertheless, further recommendations are put forward for the following species:

Badgers

Badgers are considered in section 3.3.2 of the Caversham Extended Phase 1 Survey (CH2M, 2018), with no evidence to their presence within the survey area. During this survey conducted in March 2018, a partially used badger sett entrance was found on the edge of the survey area (TN 13), with potentially additional entrances under dense scrub vegetation.

Bats

If the culvert under the access track (TN 1) is to be impacted, a preliminary bat survey will need to be conducted before works commence. If bats are found to use this as a roost, then a mitigation strategy will be required, along with consultation with Natural England.

Birds

Twelve species were recorded during the survey in March 2018, however they were either; listed in the body of the main report, or listed on the green list on the Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BoCC 4²). These species do not change the recommendations for birds given in the Caversham Extended Phase 1 Survey (CH2M, 2018). An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECW) will need to be present when clearing vegetation during the breeding season (March – August) to prevent disturbance.

Reptiles

The entire area is considered suitable for reptiles. Therefore, a detailed reptile survey will be required if any of the ruderal and/or scrub habitats are to be impacted.

Water Vole

Water voles are discussed within section 3.3.10 of the *Caversham Extended Phase 1 Survey* (CH2M, 2018). However, the stream along the northern edge of Lowfield farm, specifically the area adjacent to the marshy grassland, is considered more suitable for water voles than the river Thames. If this stream is to be impacted, a water vole survey will be required to determine presence/absence.

² <https://www.bto.org/science/monitoring/psob>

Other fauna

Whilst on site, grey squirrels were recorded within the survey area. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 contains measures to prevent the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to native wildlife. Schedule 9, for England and Wales, makes it an offence to release any of the named species (animals or plants), unless under license. This includes accidental capture, such as grey squirrels during works. The most efficient way to respond to non-native species would be to plan the works using methods that avoid the risk of accidentally trapping mammals.

Muntjac deer were also noted within the survey area, however a method statement will not be required. Best practices during construction, such as no open excavations left over night, and consideration for this species by the ECW should be enough to manage this species during construction.

Considering the recommendations above, fields at Lowfield farm need to be incorporated into the protected species surveys being conducted for future stages of the project.

Table A1 – Target notes and Photographs

Table A1 – Target notes and Photographs to accompany Figure A1 – Lowland farm, Caversham.

Target Note	Description	Photographs
1	A brick culvert, under the access track to site, with water flowing east. This has some bat potential. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018	
2	An area of stream which widens, full of aquatic vegetation, with water flowing to the east. Suitable for amphibians, but not Great Crested Newts (GCN). Photo taken on 23rd March 2018	
3	The stream is approximately 2-3 m wide, with steep earth banks and shaded by the overhanging trees. Private gardens make up the north bank.	No Photograph
4	Small woodpile, potential hibernacula for reptiles. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018.	

5	A wide border of ruderal vegetation, with patches of scrub, along both the northern and southern borders of the field. Suitable for breeding birds, mammals and reptiles. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018.	
6	Small concrete culvert running under the survey area, into the stream.	No Photograph
7	Ares of scrub, primarily comprising of bramble, throughout the species poor semi-improved grassland. Suitable for breeding birds, mammals and reptiles. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018.	
8	Within the center of the survey area, presence of wetland vegetation (such as sharp and soft rush) indicates seasonal flooding/wetter periods during times of the year.	No Photograph
9	Potential fly-tipping, creating another potential hibernacula. Suitable for reptiles. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018.	

		
10	Stream is bordered by vegetation. Suitable for amphibians (not GCN) and water voles. Photo taken on 23rd March 2018.	
11	Marsh/Marshy grassland which makes up most of the area at this location. Suitable for amphibians (not GCN) and water voles.	No Photograph
12	Area of ruderal and scrub vegetation, bordering the houses to the south. Lots of rubbish appears to have been 'dumped' over the fence. Increased presence of rabbit holes along the southern edge.	No Photograph
13	A mammal pathway into the wooded area revealed a D-shaped, partially used badger hole. Further pathways lead northeast into adjoining field. Photo taken 23rd March 2018.	

Figure A1 – Phase 1 Habitat Mapping

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