



Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

Jubilee Park, Dinas Lane, L36 2NW.

On behalf of Surfacing Standards Ltd.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Report number: SURF/23-002

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The advice contained in this report is based on the information available and/or collected during the period of study. We cannot completely eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found through further investigation and/or by survey at different times of the year or in different years.

Surveys and assessments are undertaken on the understanding that nothing in our reports will be omitted, amended or misrepresented by the client or any other interested party.

Please be aware the information contained within this report is valid for a period not exceeding two years. After this time, data contained within will require updating.

Contents

1. Executive summary.....4

2. Introduction..... 5

 2.1 Legislation & Policy..... 8

3. Methodology.....10

4. Results..... 13

5. Constraints and Recommendations.....22

6. References.....24

7. Appendices

 Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat map and legend

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological assessment at Jubilee Park, Dinas Lane, Knowsley, Liverpool. The assessment was undertaken on the 8th of November 2023.

The site comprises a large patch of amenity grassland with some hard standing designated strips used as a cricket pitch and a hard standing path between the current pavilion building. A small cluster of trees are found within the western corner of the site, which are to be impacted during proposal works to accommodate hard standing parking infrastructure. The site sits within a large sports and recreation park, which is chiefly amenity grassland and hard standing. The site is nearby to the dense urban area of Roby, Liverpool.

The proposal plans include the addition of a large all-weather sport pitch with bordered fencing and floodlighting. The habitat which will be lost to facilitate the development is amenity grassland and several small trees within the western corner of the site; therefore, to facilitate this development, a survey for protected species was required.

The park is bounded by metal and wooden fencing across the entire site, with no obvious boundary for the proposal area itself. The results of the survey indicate that the proposed development will not have a determinantal impact on important habitats on site.

No signs of badger usage or other mammals were noted across the site. Due to the sites position, it is possible that urban fox may frequent the park.

Lighting proposals included within infrastructure development must be altered to prevent light pollution spillage onto nearby tree lines and hedgerows and should be contained within proposed hard standing footprint.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Surfacing Standards Ltd to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of a parcel of land identified for an upgrade to a permanent all-weather sports pitch with supporting infrastructure. The site is found at Jubilee Park, Liverpool (approx. National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ 429915; refer to the redline boundary shown on *Figure 2.1 below*.



Figure 2.1; Site Location and Extent. (Google Earth, 2023)

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Fig 2.2: Proposal plan layout for site (Surfacing Standards, 2023).

This report will therefore provide baseline information as derived from the diurnal appraisal process outlined and recommend any necessary additional surveys, or work, where applicable, to provide a conclusive ecological impact assessment.

The Applicant should be aware that if during the appraisal:

- The application site/area was found to be suitable for any European Protected Species (EPS), otherwise protected, or priority habitats/species, or,
- Signs of use by particular protected species were found, or suspected, or,
- Seasonal constraints significantly limit the gathering of ecological information to arrive at an accurate conclusion on which the planning application can proceed.

Then more detailed surveys may be recommended where necessary, to allow the ecologist to arrive at a conclusive impact assessment.

If any protected species was subsequently found during detailed further surveys and / or may be affected by the development proposals, then a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) may be required to proceed with the development.

Protected/priority species omitted from this report have been discounted due to factors including obvious absence/isolation of suitable habitats, and/or distributional aspects negating the necessity to survey for them, and/or the proposed works were not considered to negatively impact the species or encroach on areas where the species may be present.

2.1 Legislation & Policy

The legislature considered for the purposes of this report includes the following:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amendment) (2019) (EU Exit)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)
- Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act (1992)
- The Hedgerow Regulations (1997)
- Town and Country Planning Act (1990)
- Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996)

These acts entail relevance to both protected and invasive species. The degree of protection offered to taxa provided within existing UK and EU legislature often varies depending on species/group, for example, some species may purely be protected during one of its life stages (e.g., common species of breeding bird whilst nesting/with eggs/young); some species may receive full protection within the EU (e.g., otter), whereas others may be protected solely on a national basis (e.g., grass snake).

Policy

Paragraph 180 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in July 2021) states:

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits

of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and,

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

This is supported by – ‘Biodiversity and geodiversity’ in the local biodiversity plan, Merseyside Green Space Strategy.

The study is documented in this report and includes the following:

- Preliminary ecological baseline for the site;
- Protected mammals’ assessment of the site;
- A desk study including Magic map data search;
- Potential ecological constraints to the development of the site; and
- Further ecological work necessary for a planning submission.

All Work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management’s (CIEEM) Code of Practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

A daytime preliminary ecological appraisal was conducted on the 8th of November 2023 at around 11am in wet and windy conditions by Natural England licensed surveyor, Christian Leigh.

Floristic assessment

The survey followed the UK Habitat Classification Version 1.1 (Butcher et.al., 2020) being introduced as part of the roll out of Biodiversity Net-gain with reference to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 Habitat Methodology standards (JNCC, 2010) and reference to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Technical Guidance Series “Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd Edition” (CIEEM, 2017).

During the survey walkover, botanical assemblages were assessed, and the land was inspected for the presence of red-listed (Stroh et al, 2014; Hodgetts, 2011), s.41 and LBAP species alongside specially protected species as listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended) and / or Schedule 5 The Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU exit) Regulations (2019). Species nomenclature follows Stace, C. (2019) – definitive English names for vascular plants, Smith, A. (2004) for mosses, and Dobson, F. (2018) for lichens.

In combination with assessing the area in relation to flora and habitats of conservation importance, the land was also assessed in relation to the presence of invasive non-native species (INNS) as listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

Faunal assessment

The identification and/or evidence of fauna encountered was documented whilst in tandem the area was assessed for the potential to support the priority species covered in the previous paragraphs. The ‘walkover’ also aimed to identify any ephemeral pools or unmapped waterbodies.

Bats

Trees (where present) were inspected for places that may be of value to bats and to determine if evidence of use was present; this typically involves a search for potential roost features along with an investigation of those features using a high-powered torch or close focus binoculars. Potential roost features can include woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed lifted bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached Ivy with stem diameters in excess of 50mm or bat/bird boxes. All mature trees were assessed for their potential to host roosting bats.

Criteria for preliminary bat roost assessment are based upon the determinants given in the Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016):

Landscape Assessment

Bats use regular commuting and foraging routes; these are usually linear features such as hedgerows and watercourse corridors. The loss and severance of such a feature may have an indirect impact on the bats. Therefore, it is important that if the development impacts on these features, they are assessed.

Breeding Birds

Buildings, trees, hedges, and scrub (where present) were checked for evidence of nesting birds and suitability for relevant species. Bird species observed and heard were recorded on site, and a search was made for nest material, or areas suitable for nesting.

Additional to the site's capacity to support generally common species for breeding, the area was also subject to an assessment for the site's capacity to support species especially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), for example Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and other priority species.

Other terrestrial mammals

The walkover included a search for field signs of Badger (*Meles meles*) which includes signs of activity such as digging, setts, 'runs' leading to and from a sett and the existence of latrines or 'snuffle' holes where badgers have foraged in the ground. Any signs indicative of use of the site by European Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), or habitats of value to them, were also recorded.

Amphibians and Reptiles

During desktop assessment, a 250m search was undertaken from a site-central grid reference in relation to the presence of ponds, ditches or other water bodies that may support Great Crested Newts (GCN). The information gathered was then used to aid in establishing if more detailed surveys are required.

The site and its surroundings were assessed for suitability for use by reptiles, with particular attention paid to features that could be used as basking areas (e.g., south-facing slopes), hibernation sites (e.g., banks, walls, piles of hardcore) and opportunities for foraging (e.g., rough grassland and scrub).

The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report are based on a number of factors i.e., Skills and experience of the surveyor, knowledge of flora and fauna relevant to the site location and geographical range.

4. RESULTS

Site survey

Habitats within the survey area

The results of the Phase 1 Habitat survey and details are shown in *Appendix 1*, with accompanying photographs shown within the text (below). Habitat descriptions are provided, and plant species are referred to using their English names.

The survey site covers the full extent of the land shown in *Fig 2.1*. The proposed development will see the addition of an all-weather sports pitch, with associated lighting and hard standing features including car parking infrastructure.

Ecologically, the proposal site sits within a recreational park within suburban Liverpool. The site features predominantly amenity grassland, with hard standing parcels featuring in the form of a path and as the footprint to small buildings such as the current pavilion (to be retained as part of the proposal). As the site is used all year-round by local residents, it is regularly mowed and well-maintained.

The southern border of the proposal site comprises typical wooden garden fencing, with metal park fencing featuring as the western border. Found within the western corner of site is a small woodland area, that will be directly impacted by the planned addition of hard standing parking facilities; most of the trees in this area are to be retained but it was suitably assessed and checked. No clear boundaries feature along the northern and eastern sides, but the site runs up to the current walking path which will be retained. Small basketball and cricket pitches currently feature atop the hard standing parcel within the red line boundary.

Habitats

The site is regularly mowed and maintained all year round and is consistently used by local residents. A small tree cluster found within the western corner offers some bird nesting potential, as some of the species of tree create a low, dense bush.

Site Boundaries

The southern site boundary consists of typical wooden garden fencing and typical metal park

fencing to the west. No clear boundary is found at the northern or eastern boundaries of the proposal area.

Surrounding habitats

The wider habitat comprises the dense residential suburb of Huyton, dominated by dense rows of residential dwellings and retail units. Several smaller patches of grassland (school fields and parks) are segregated from each other.

A map showing the specific habitat areas is presented in ***Appendix 1***.



Photograph 1; A view of the parcel of land planned for the proposal. The site features hard standing areas such as this small basketball court.



Photograph 2; A view of the amenity grassland toward the western section of the site. No signs of mammal usage were noted across the site during the survey.



Photograph 3; A closer view of the hard standing patch on site, currently used as a basketball court.



Photograph 4; A view towards the southern boundary of the site. Typical mixed fencing features as the boundary in this section.



Photograph 5; View of the eastern boundary of the site. A species-rich hedgerow features beyond the boundaries and will not be impacted by development works.



Photograph 6; A view of the pavilion building on site that is to remain. The hard standing ground currently present will be extended onto site.



Photograph 7; A standard park metal fence features along the western border. Beech and oak trees feature toward the boundary. Some of these trees will be lost during development works.



Photograph 8; A view toward the southwestern corner of the site. Further beech trees were noted, as well as some smaller bush planting.



Photograph 9; All trees within the western corner were thoroughly checked and assessed for PRF's (Potential Roosting features). None of which were found in any of the trees on site.



Photograph 10; The western boundary of the site comprises typical park fencing.

Protected and notable species

Invertebrates

No notable invertebrate species were recorded; and no suitable species that support flowering vegetation feature on site.

Amphibians

Great crested newts are protected by Schedule 2 of the Convention of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), which provide protection to both the individuals and the areas they use for rest, shelter or breeding. Great crested newts are also a UK BAP and LBAP priority species.

No ponds feature within a 100m radius of site.

Bats

Surrounding habitat and Tree Inspection

The site features several different species of tree within the western corner. These trees will be directly impacted by development works, with some being identified for removal, and were therefore assessed for PRF's (Potential Roosting features). No PRF's were noted across any of the trees within the western corner, and the site is deemed to offer negligible suitability for bats.

The pavilion building on site is to be retained as part of the proposal plans.

Breeding Birds

Also within the western section of site are some lower dense bushes, which were found to offer some bird nesting potential. Additionally, sections of dense hedgerow feature beyond the southern boundary which may be indirectly affected by the development work being undertaken close by. Therefore, any removal of bushes on site should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August).

Badger

No signs of badger usage were noted across the site, or within the surrounding area.

Other mammals

The proposed site, highlighted for development, may present little suitable habitat for other mammals due to its size and lack of suitable features.

Site location

The site is over 1KM from two local nature reserves; Childwall Woods and Fields - 3KM Southwest, and Croxteth - 3.1KM). The site features within a SSSI impact Risk zone, but, if lighting proposals are followed, the scale of development is self-contained and does not affect the wider environment detrimentally.

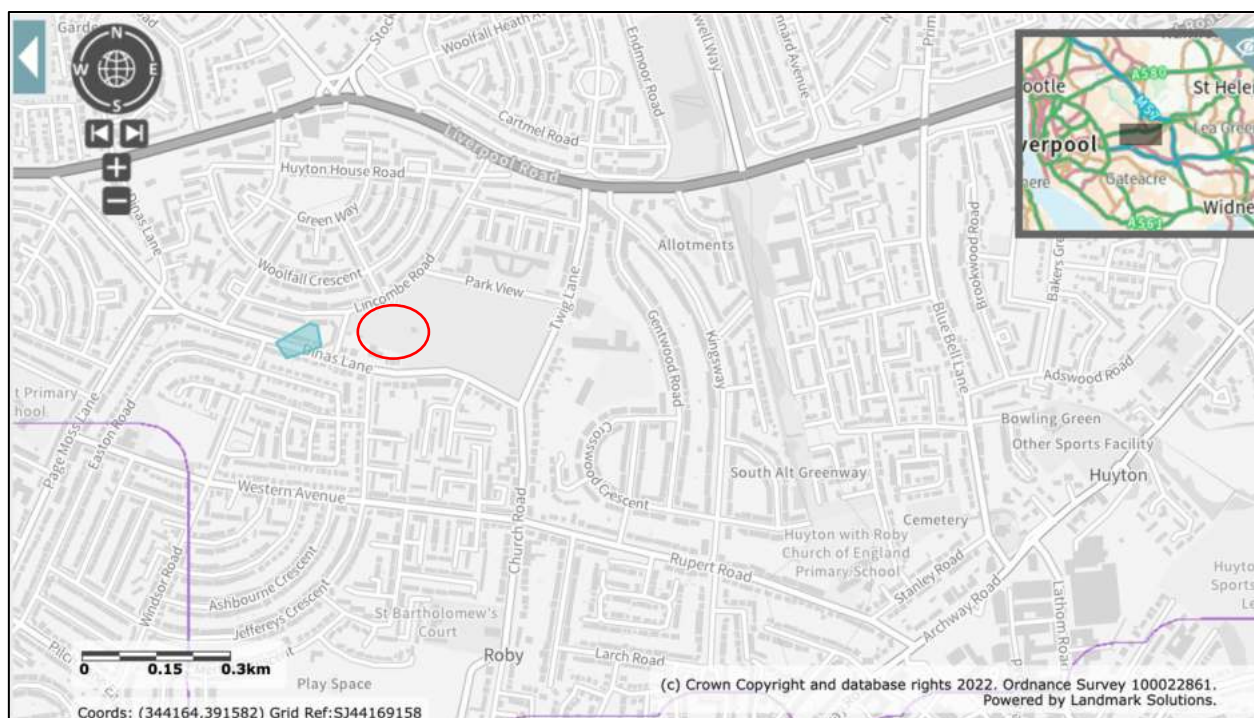


Fig 4.1: Magic Maps (DEFRA, 2023).

5. CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development (within the red line site boundary as shown in *Figure 2.1*) will consist of the addition of an all-weather hardstanding sports pitch with associated infrastructure, including car parking and access.

Positioning, construction, and post construction impacts are therefore likely upon both the habitats and species within and immediately adjacent to the site. Ecological constraints and recommendations with regard to any development of the site are discussed below.

Non-native invasive species

Plants

No invasive species were located within the red line boundary. No instances of plant species feature within the red line boundary, and therefore none will be removed.

Protected species

Bats

The trees on site feature no PRF's and therefore offer *negligible suitability for bats*.

Where lighting is necessary in areas of tree/shrub planting, this will be low wattage, directional, low level and/or shaded to minimise light spill (<1Lux) onto potential flight lines and foraging habitat to ensure that the overall impact caused by lighting the site is negligible. These recommendations are particularly in reference to flood lighting being used on the development site.

The lighting scheme will be designed with regard to guidance such as the Bat Conservation Trust Statement on the impact and design of artificial light on bats, and the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes, to minimise disturbance to bats and other wildlife due to artificial lighting.

Birds

Minimal suitable habitat is to be removed during development works, but one dense, low bush was identified and offers some bird nesting potential. **All removal work should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August).**

Because of the possible presence of nesting birds within features beyond the site boundary, lighting impacts, as stated above, should be addressed to minimise light pollution.

Badgers

No signs of badgers or other mammal species were noted across the site and immediate surrounding area.

6. REFERENCES

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat Map



KEY:

Building-



Amenity Grassland-



Hard Standing-



Tree-

