

**Baseline Ecological Survey  
Proposed Flight Training Facility  
Oxford Airport  
Kidlington  
Oxfordshire**

**October 2017**

**CONSULTANT:**

Elizabeth McKay B.A. (Hons.) MCIEEM CEnv.  
Consultant Ecologist  
Burleigh Cottage  
Droitwich Road  
Hanbury  
Worcestershire  
B60 4DB

01527 821224

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page No</b>
<b>BASELINE SURVEY</b>	
1. Introduction	3
2. Methods	3
3. Site Description	3
4. Assessment of Potential for Protected Species	4
5. Conclusions	5
6. Recommendations	6
Appendix 1 – Photographs	

---

## **BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SURVEY – PROPOSED FLIGHT TRAINING FACILITY – OXFORD AIRPORT – KIDLINGTON - OXFORDSHIRE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the results of a baseline ecological survey of an area of land at Oxford Airport which is proposed to be redeveloped as a flight training facility. The survey was undertaken on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2017.

The area surveyed consists of an area of mown grass, trees and ornamental shrubs.

This report includes a site description, an assessment of the potential of the site to contain protected species, an evaluation, and recommendations for protection and enhancements.

Site photographs are included in appendix 1.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

The baseline ecological survey used the extended Phase 1 habitat survey methodology recommended by the Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA 1995) in “Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment”. This is based on the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology developed by the former Nature Conservancy Council (1990), a nationally accepted standard method for baseline ecological survey.

The site survey was undertaken by Elizabeth McKay a Consultant Ecologist and licenced bat worker with 25 years of experience. An assessment of the suitability of trees on the site for bats was carried out. The assessment was undertaken from the ground using binoculars.

A general assessment of the site was made in order to establish whether there were likely to be any other protected species affected by the proposals.

### **3. SITE DESCRIPTION**

#### **Context**

The site is located in a semi-rural situation to the north-west of Kidlington in Oxfordshire. There are buildings associated with the airport to the north as well as a Business Park and associated mature trees and lawn areas around the airport site. To the south-east is an industrial estate and to the south-west is an Immigration detention centre. Otherwise to the south are areas of arable and pasture land including hedgerows. There are further areas of agricultural land to the north-east including trees, hedgerows, arable land and pasture. The Oxford Canal is approximately 700m to the east.

The site itself consists of mown grass areas, trees and ornamental trees.

## Amenity Grass

### J1.2 Amenity Grassland

Much of the site consists of mown grass areas consisting of commonly occurring grasses including Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*.

Other flowering plants included Cut-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Common Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, Autumn Hawkbit *Leontodon officinale* Self Heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and Violet *Viola riviniana*.

There is wire mesh fencing on the western boundary of the site otherwise the site is entirely open. To the south of the site on the other side of the access road is a continuous native hedge.

## Trees and Shrubs

### A3.1 Scattered Trees / J1.4 Introduced Shrubs

In the north-western corner of the site are some young Norway Maple *Acer platanoides* trees. Along the northern boundary are a line young to mid aged Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* which have been pollarded. There are also three semi-mature pollarded Common Lime *Tilia cordata* trees along the northern boundary widely spaced.

Further to the east are some ornamental shrubs including Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Box *Buxus sempervirens* and Lilac *Syringa vulgaris*. There are also two Cherry trees – one mature and one young to mid-aged.

## 4. ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL FOR PROTECTED SPECIES

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2010 provide protection for the following species against killing, injury, disturbance or sale. The legislation also protects their places of shelter, protection, breeding and resting sites.

### Bats

The trees on the site were assessed for their potential for roosting bats. However based on a careful assessment from the ground using binoculars where necessary the trees were not found to contain suitable cavities for roosting bats.

The walkway alongside the trees on the northern boundary was also lit which would be discouraging to foraging and roosting bats.

There are no buildings affected by the proposals.

### **Birds**

The trees do provide nesting opportunities for birds however and two larger birds nests were noted.

Precautionary recommendations with regard to nesting birds have been made below because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive as well as recommendations for compensatory hedgerow planting.

### **Badgers**

- Badgers are protected under the protection of Badgers act 1992.

The application site and areas for at least 30m from the edge of the planning application boundary were searched for evidence of badgers in the form of setts, latrines, snuffles holes and trackways. No evidence was found.

### **Great Crested Newts**

Based on studies of large scale ordnance survey maps and aerial photography it does not appear that there are any ponds within a 250m radius of the site.

Therefore it is not considered that Great Crested Newts are likely to be affected by construction activities.

### **Other Protected Species**

It is not considered that the site is likely to provide high quality habitat for any other protected species given the nature of the site.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The site consists of closely mown amenity grassland, scattered trees and ornamental shrubs at Oxford Airport. To the north, east and west of the site are modern buildings associated with the Airport and adjacent Business Park. To the south is a hedgerow and access roads – beyond this agricultural land.

The proposal is to building a flight training facility with associated car parking on the land.

The mown grass areas consists of common grasses and other commonly occurring flowering plants and are not species diverse.

There are however three semi-mature Common Lime trees widely spaced along the northern boundary. These trees are of ecological value as good specimen native mature trees of value for invertebrates and nesting birds. These are recommended for retention if at all feasible.

Otherwise the other trees are ornamental / non native and include Norway Maple, Sycamore and Cherry as well as smaller shrubs including Hawthorn, Privet, Lilac and Box. Native hedgerow and shrub planting have been recommended to mitigate for the loss of these trees and shrubs.

Precautionary recommendations have also been made with regard to nesting birds with regard to removal of trees and shrubs because nesting birds were noted and because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive.

Otherwise, the trees were assessed for their suitability for roosting bats from the ground with binoculars where necessary by an Ecologist and licenced bat worker. However none of the trees were found to contain suitable cavities.

There were no apparent ponds within 250m of the proposed development site as far as it could be ascertained from large scale ordnance survey maps and aerial photographs. Therefore it is not considered likely that Great Crested Newts would be impacted by construction works.

No evidence of badger activity was found on the site or immediate surrounds and otherwise given the nature of the habitats affected it is not considered likely that any other protected or notable species would be affected by the proposals.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Trees and shrubs to be felled should be removed outside the nesting season i.e between September and February or otherwise checked for nesting birds during the nesting season – March to August. However nests were noted and active nests could not be disturbed until young have fledged because of the legal protection which nesting birds receive.
2. It is recommended that the three widely spaced mature Lime Trees along the northern boundary are retained if at all feasible as good specimen mature nature trees which provide good habitat for invertebrate species and nesting birds.
3. Replanting to compensate for trees and shrubs lost is recommended within the landscape proposals wherever possible. Native hedge species are recommended including; Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Ash, Holly, Hazel and Field Maple because these are species native to the locality. Opportunities exist on the southern, northern and eastern boundaries of the site.
4. It should be ensured that any lighting associated with the proposals is muted, directional, cowled, bollard style. This is because bright lighting is deterring to nesting birds and other wildlife.

5. Trees to be retained will be protected from damage by use of robust protective fencing during construction works.

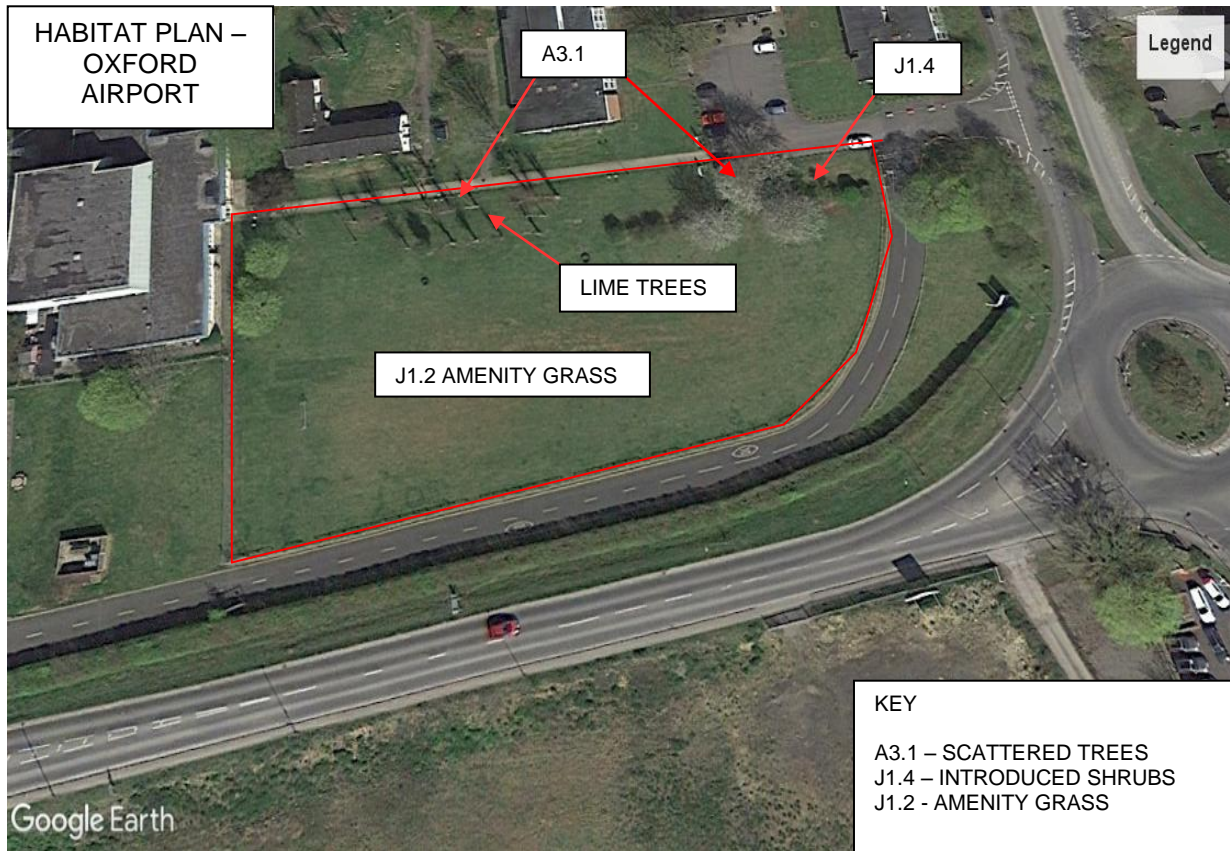
## **7. REFERENCES**

Nature Conservancy Council (1993). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey*. JNCC, Peterborough, UK.

**APPENDIX 1 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS**



**SITE CONTEXT – LAND AT OXFORD AIRPORT**



**HABITAT PLAN – LAND AT OXFORD AIRPORT**





**PHOTO 1 – SHOWING SITE LOOKING SOUTH EAST**



**PHOTO 2 – TREES ON WEST BOUNDARY**



**PHOTO 3 – TREES ON NORTHERN BOUNDARY**



**PHOTO 4 – TREES ON NORTHERN BOUNDARY**



**PHOTO 5 – ORNAMENTAL SHRUBS – NORTHERN BOUNDARY**



**PHOTO 6 – TREES AND SHRUBS NORTH-EAST PART OF SITE**



**PHOTO 7 – TREES AND SHRUBS NORTH-EAST CORNER**



**PHOTO 8 – TREES AND SHRUBS NORTHERN BOUNDARY FROM NORTH-EAST CORNER**



**PHOTO 9 – NORTHERN BOUNDARY TREES FROM EAST**