

APPENDIX 10.2
CHERWELL COUNCIL ECOLOGIST SURVEY SCOPING
COMMUNICATION

RE: Ecology Scoping Advice - NW Bicester

Charlotte Watkins <Charlotte.Watkins@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>

Mon 13/07/2020 12:14

To: Hannah Gardner <hannah.gardner@aspect-ecology.com>

Dear Hannah

I am not sure what the proposals are on site and therefore can only give a general response that the surveys outlined below would appear to fit in with what is generally expected on a greenfield site.

Dependent on what is found on site in terms of vegetation and the proposals there may be need for further surveys (I can only think of butterflies as an example).

We have the piece of woodland there recorded as potential S41 habitat and many badger records.

My only other comment to flag at this stage is that we would be looking for a meaningful overall net gain for biodiversity and we currently *seek* a level of 10% as calculated by a metric. If any 'off site' land would be needed to help fulfil this then that might also need surveying. The proposals should anyway consider this up front in light of any habitat data that results from your surveys.

If/when a formal pre-application consultation comes in then I may be able to comment more fully but currently I cannot see any issues with your surveys as outlined.

Kind regards

Charlotte

Dr Charlotte Watkins**Ecology Officer**

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My usual working hours are: Monday and Wednesday mornings.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): In response to the latest Government guidance and until further notice, the Planning Service has been set up to work remotely, from home. Customers are asked not to come to Bodicote House but instead to phone or email the Planning Service on 01295 227006: planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk. For the latest information about how the Planning Service is impacted by COVID-19, please check the website: www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk

From: Hannah Gardner <hannah.gardner@aspect-ecology.com>**Sent:** 07 July 2020 15:30**To:** Charlotte Watkins <Charlotte.Watkins@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>**Subject:** Ecology Scoping Advice - NW Bicester

Hi Charlotte,

I write with regard to a site at North West Bicester (location shown within the attached plan) for which our client is hoping to bring forward a planning application later this year and for which we are currently providing ecological advice.

To date we have carried out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, tree inspection surveys for bats, a Badger survey, a Great Crested Newt eDNA survey of an identified offsite pond within 250m of the

site, a single Water Vole and Otter survey of the watercourses adjacent to site, and the first of three proposed breeding bird surveys. The above survey work has been undertaken between May – June 2020. The site is recorded to largely comprise long-sward grassland with tall ruderal vegetation and uncultivated arable land, with an areas of semi-mature - mature woodland. All parcels were largely bound by hedgerows / treelines, with watercourses also present adjacent to portions of the southern and south-eastern boundaries.

A wider area encompassing the current much of the site boundary and a larger area to the south-west were previously subject to third-party survey work between 2010 and 2013 (Ref: 14/00005/SCOP). This survey work is now considered out of date and update survey work is to be undertaken by Aspect Ecology to inform the new application. I would be grateful for your opinion on whether you consider the below proposed survey work to be proportionate and sufficient to inform a planning application at the site.

Bat Activity Surveys

The site is considered likely to offer low foraging and commuting opportunities for bats, with a range of common species recorded during the third-party survey work in 2010, predominantly around the watercourse corridors. It is proposed to undertake update manual and automated activity surveys. In accordance with the methodology within Bat Conservation Trust (2016) "Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines", the site will be subject to a one survey visit per season during 2020 - 2021, with two static detectors deployed in suitable locations during each survey.

Water Vole / Otter

Given the presence of watercourses adjacent to portions the site, and records of Water Vole returned from the local area, Water Vole and Otter surveys will be undertaken in line with best practice guidance set out in 'The Water Vole Conservation Handbook' (2016). To date, the first survey visit (June 2020) has been undertaken, during which no signs of either species were recorded.

Great Crested Newt

A single pond was identified between parcels of the site during the Phase 1 Habitat survey and Great Crested Newt have been recorded within ponds to the south of the site during the previous third-party survey work. An eDNA survey of the above pond has been undertaken, for which we are awaiting the results. If the test proves positive, a full suite of six survey visits to inform a population class assessment will be undertaken in 2021, as per Natural England guidance.

Reptiles

Small numbers of Common Lizard were previously recorded within the wider area during surveys undertaken by the third-party consultancy in 2010. Furthermore records of Common Lizard and

Grass Snake have been returned from the local area and the site supports suitable habitat for such species. To provide updated survey results, habitat considered to offer suitable foraging and sheltering opportunities for reptiles will be subject to full update reptile survey work.

Breeding Bird Surveys

Breeding bird surveys were undertaken within the wider area by the third-party consultancy in 2010 and recorded the Schedule 1 species Barn Owl, a good assemblage of red and amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) and a number of Priority Species breeding or probably breeding within the site. As such, update breeding bird surveys are to be undertaken, utilising a modified common bird census (CBC) methodology which would identify all species breeding and utilising the site, over three visits spread out over April – June. To date the first survey (June 2020) has been undertaken, with the remaining surveys scheduled for 2021.

Phase 2 survey work considered unnecessary.

National Vegetation Classification surveys of the grassland and woodland were previously undertaken within the wider area (in 2010 by the third-party consultancy), which assessed the habitats to not be of particularly elevated value whilst the most recent Phase 1 survey work indicates that the habitats have not significantly changed, remaining largely dominated by common and widespread species. As such, update NVC surveys are considered unnecessary.

Faunal surveys for White-clawed Crayfish, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, wintering birds and Dormouse were also previously undertaken in 2010 by the third-party consultancy. This survey work identified that the site supported a limited diversity of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates and wintering birds only and given the similar nature of the site in recent survey work it is considered that these assemblages are unlikely to have significantly changed such that update survey work is considered unnecessary.

The survey work for White-clawed Crayfish found no evidence of this species, and note records of Signal Crayfish from on-site and within the wider River Bure catchment. It is therefore highly unlikely that White-clawed Crayfish are present within the watercourses onsite, and update surveys have not been recommended.

The previous Dormouse surveys undertaken at the site (2010) found no evidence of Dormouse. Furthermore there are no records of Dormouse returned from the 2km search area. As such it is considered highly unlikely they are present on-site, such that update surveys are not considered necessary.

I would welcome your thoughts on the above approach and look forward to your response. Should you have any queries in the meantime please do feel free to contact me on the below contact details.

Kind regards

Hannah

Hannah Gardner


Senior Ecologist

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