



**LAND OFF SKIMMINGDISH LANE
BICESTER
ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

March 2010

Bioscan Report No.
E1599R1

COMMISSIONED BY
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Appendix 1: List of Higher Plant Species Recorded

1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Bioscan (UK) Limited were instructed by Hives Planning to carry out an extended Phase 1 habitat survey and protected species assessment of a parcel of land adjoining Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for office development with associated parking, turning and landscaping areas (Ref: 10/00324/OUT). The site has an existing consent from 2005 (05/01563/OUT) and the last biodiversity survey of the site dates from this time. Cherwell District Council have advised that they cannot register application 10/00324/OUT as the site requires an up-to-date biodiversity survey.
- 1.1.3 This report seeks to address this requirement by providing a current assessment of the site's ecological value.

1.2 Survey methodology

- 1.2.1 Baseline data on the ecological resource of the site was collected through a combination of desk survey and field survey in March 2010.

Desk survey

- 1.2.2 In order to obtain archive and contextual data on the ecological interest present within the site and the surrounding area, the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was contacted for information they hold on areas designated for their nature conservation interest within 2 km of the site as well as notable/protected species records for the same search area. In addition the 2005 ecological appraisal of the site carried out by EPR was reviewed.
- 1.2.3 This information was supplemented by accessing web-based data sources such as the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (www.nbn.org.uk) and the Government's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside website (www.magic.gov.uk). Bioscan's own in-house archive and knowledge of the area was also drawn upon.

Field survey

- 1.2.4 A habitat and botanical survey of the site was carried out on 11th March 2010. The baseline methodology followed was the standard Phase 1 approach devised by the former Nature Conservancy Council¹. This approach provides an inventory of the basic habitats present, and targets areas of more interest which are then subject to a more detailed examination, or which may require further survey. Such additional

¹

Nature Conservancy Council (1990) 'A Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey'

detail was collected during the survey in the form of representative lists of species compiled for each habitat (an 'extended' Phase 1 survey).

- 1.2.5 The existence and extent of any habitats identified under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was noted during the survey, with reference to the qualifying attributes set out in BRIG 2008.² In addition, hedgerows were assessed for their potential to meet the criteria of an 'Important' hedgerow as defined by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. This involved counting the number of native woody species per 30m stretch, and recording relevant features such as ditches, banks, standard trees and gaps.
- 1.2.6 In addition to the habitat survey, a detailed search was carried out for evidence of badger *Meles meles* activity such as setts, runs, foraging evidence, latrines and snagged hair, with the site's potential to support other protected species, such as reptiles, bats and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, also assessed. All incidental observations of other fauna were recorded during the survey, with particular attention paid to species subject to national BAPs, and hence of 'Principal Importance' further to section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, or otherwise of elevated conservation status.

²

UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions. BRIG (ed. Ant Maddock) 2008.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Site context

- 2.1.1 The site, which is approximately 2.3 ha in size, is located east of Skimmingdish Lane, which forms its western boundary. The site is bounded by arable land to the north and east (part of which falls within the site blue line and as such was incorporated into the survey), and by a green lane with pasture beyond to the south-east.
- 2.1.2 The site is dominated by coarse grassland with associated ruderals and scattered patches of bramble. The site's former use for allotments is evidenced by the presence of broken down sheds, fencing and other makeshift structures, as well as miscellaneous debris such as pallets and corrugated sheeting. Extending out from the green lane hedgerows at the south-eastern edge of the site is a patch of willow scrub with tall ruderal vegetation. The topography is essentially flat.
- 2.1.3 Soils are mapped as falling between the Aberford association (typically well-drained and fine loamy brown calcareous earths), and the Wickham 2 association (typically fine loamy over clayey soils). On the arable parts of the area surveyed the surface soils displayed a fairly stony structure with fragments of the underlying Cornbrash limestone. Superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel are mapped as occurring in the southern part of the site, in part associated with the historic floodplain of the Langford Brook.

2.2 Designations and notable species

- 2.2.1 The site is not subject to any statutory nature conservation designation such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The nearest such site is Stratton Audley Quarries SSSI, which lies some 1.35 km to the north of the site, and received its notification for geological rather than biological reasons.
- 2.2.2 The site is not subject to any non-statutory nature conservation designation, though it has been proposed for inclusion in Bicester Airfield Local Wildlife Site (LWS) following surveys undertaken by TVERC and the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust in 2003.
- 2.2.3 Three LWS fall within a 2km radius of the site. The nearest is Gavray Drive Meadows LWS, the edge of which lies approximately 875 metres SSW of the site. This is a group of flower rich meadows which has escaped the use of fertilizers and herbicides and not been ploughed or reseeded, and which has distinctive ridges and furrows from medieval ploughing. It also harbours populations of great crested newts, grass snake, common lizard, scarce butterflies such as black and brown hairstreak and birds such as grasshopper warbler.
- 2.2.4 Stratton Audley Quarries LWS lies approximately 1.15 kilometres NNE of the site, and received its designation on the basis of its limestone grassland and invertebrate interest. The 'Meadows NW of Blackthorn Hill' LWS is located approximately 1.9 kilometres SSE of the site, and is a hay meadow which has escaped agricultural

improvement and retained its medieval ridge and furrow. Parts of the field are wet, and as such its wildflower interest includes some wetland species.

- 2.2.5 No specially protected or other notable species records fall within the site boundary, though there are records of kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (dated 2003) from the nearby stream which, at its closest point, passes just within 50 metres of the south-eastern side of the site.
- 2.2.6 There is a badger record (2005) within 1 km of the site in a north-westerly direction, and this species is known to be present within the wider area. Water vole was recorded within 1 km of the site in 2000, further along the Langford Brook which passes within 50m of the south-eastern side of the site. Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* was recorded within 1 km of the site from the village of Launton to the south-east in 1993.
- 2.2.7 Great crested newts have been recorded on several sites within a 2 km radius, though none of these lie within 1 km of the application site. Several notable species have also been recorded within Stratton Audley Quarries LWS, including grass snake, badger, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*.

2.3 Information from 2005 ecological assessment

- 2.3.1 EPR's ecological assessment dated October 2005 reveals that the north-eastern edge of the site had only recently been abandoned as an active allotment area at that time. They assessed the site as being of negligible nature conservation value for the majority of habitats and species considered.
- 2.3.2 The surveyors checked abandoned tiles and other artificial refugia found discarded within the site for any signs of reptiles on 27th September 2005, but no reptiles were found. This was a suitable time of year to carry out a reptile survey visit, though the report gives no indication of weather conditions during the survey.
- 2.3.3 Roesel's bush cricket *Metrioptera roeselii* and long-winged conehead *Conocephalus discolor* were both found on 27th September 2005. At the time, both species were noted as being Nationally Scarce, though both species were (and remain) common in the locality and this status has since been removed.
- 2.3.4 EPR's report recommended that further survey work should be carried out to check for the presence of reptiles (as a result of the suitable habitat within the site) and badgers (as not all parts of the site could be accessed to check for setts).

3 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Habitats

3.1.1 Field survey identified the following main habitat types within the site:

- Course grassland with ruderals and scattered bramble
- Arable
- Tall ruderal
- Willow scrub
- Hedgerow
- Scattered trees
- Man-made structures

3.1.2 Each habitat is mapped on Figure 1. A brief description of each habitat with an account of the dominant or more notable plant species recorded is given below. Specific features of interest are target noted. A full list of the higher plants recorded on the survey date is attached at Appendix 1.

3.1.3 It should be noted that early March is a sub-optimal time to carry out a Phase 1 habitat survey, and as such the species list obtained cannot be expected to be comparable with a species list obtained between the months of April and September. Conversely however, species such as snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* would probably be missed by a later survey.

Course grassland with ruderals and scattered bramble

3.1.4 This habitat type covers the majority of the site. The graminoid composition is overwhelmingly dominated by false oat-grass, with frequent cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and more occasional or localised common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Tussocks of tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* become more evident towards the south-eastern corner of the site and tall fescue *Festuca arundinacea* was also noted closer to Skimmingdish Lane. The ruderal component consists of a relatively restricted mixture of species, including creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, stinging nettle *Urtica dioica*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, hoary willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*, bristly ox-tongue *Picris echioides* and teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, as well as occasional yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, wood dock *Rumex sanguinea*, ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, burdock *Arctium minus* and species of planted or naturalised origin such as evening primrose *Oenothera sp.*, foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and comfrey *Symphytum sp.* Smaller forbs include frequent cleavers *Galium aparine* and occasional field forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*, and sweet violet *Viola odorata*. Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and perforate St. John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum* were noted to be locally frequent in the southern corner of the site, and red fescue and tall fescue were observed in higher density closer to Skimmingdish Lane.

- 3.1.5 Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. scrub, varying from low tangles of stems to dense thickets, is scattered throughout the grassland. The larger patches have been denoted by clusters of orange crosses on Figure 1. A single patch of bramble in the eastern part of the site was noted as being the cultivar cutleaf evergreen blackberry *Rubus laciniatus*.
- 3.1.6 The grassland was littered with debris at the time of the survey, such as corrugated metal and asbestos sheets, wire mesh, abandoned containers and other materials. This evidently originates from the former use of the site as allotments.

Arable

- 3.1.7 No areas of arable land appear to fall within the application redline, but a strip of 'blue land' adjoining the application site to the north forms part of a more extensive arable field so was included for completeness. This field was planted with a *Brassica* crop at the time of survey. The arable weeds and other flora found along the field margin include shepherd's-purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, dove's-foot crane's-bill *Geranium molle*, field speedwell *Myosotis arvensis*, annual meadow-grass *Poa annua*, annual mercury *Mercurialis annua*, nipplewort *Lapsana communis* and chickweed *Stellaria media*.

Tall ruderal

- 3.1.8 The grassland habitats that dominate the site grade eastwards into a defined band of tall ruderal habitat, much of it associated with disturbed ground evidenced by low spoil mounds and scattered debris. These areas are dominated by a tall herbaceous layer of stinging nettle and (more locally) great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, with other scattered species including raspberry *Rubus idaeus*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, cleavers, lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum*, snowdrop, daffodil *Narcissus* sp and localised patches of bramble. A stand of Michaelmas daisy *Aster* sp was noted as being locally dominant near the centre of this area. The ground layer beneath these stands is covered with a mat of the mosses *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelonga*.

Willow scrub

- 3.1.9 Forming a band up to ten metres wide at the eastern edge of the site, and grading imperceptibly into the boundary hedgerow, is an area of willow dominated scrub. This is dominated by grey willow *Salix cinerea* trees, which extend to 20 feet in height in places – many of these have fairly dense ivy cover on the trunks. Occasional spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and elder *Sambucus nigra* trees were also found within this area. Many of the trees within this area were noted to have a diameter at 1.5m above ground level of > 15cm.
- 3.1.10 The field layer beneath this scrub cover consists of a sparse covering of ivy and nettle, over a ground layer of *Kindbergia praelonga*.

Hedgerow

- 3.1.11 The hedgerow defining the south-eastern boundary of the site is clearly of some antiquity but is now rather poorly defined, grown out and fairly indistinct from the surrounding scrub. In conjunction with another hedgerow running parallel to it (but outside the site) it forms a green lane feature. Only the northern of these hedgerows was surveyed in detail, as it forms the boundary of the application site.
- 3.1.12 A defined bank and a less distinct shallow ditch run the length of the hedgerow. The hedgerow itself incorporates several standard trees, mostly of crack willow, and is generally intact (or could be made so by laying) through it becomes gappy towards its southern end.
- 3.1.13 Four native woody species were counted along a sample 30m stretch of hedgerow. The species recorded within the full length of the hedgerow include field maple *Acer campestre*, elder, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, grey willow, crack willow *Salix fragilis*, dog rose *Rosa canina* and, of interest, the naturalised species many-flowered rose *Rosa multiflora* (looking well-established at this location). Climbing hop *Humulus lupulus* was noted in places and the ground flora consists of lords-and-ladies, forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis* and ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*.

Scattered trees

- 3.1.14 A number of trees are scattered throughout the site, with ages ranging from saplings to mature trees. Of the larger specimens, hawthorn is the most prevalent within the site, with the remaining species including blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, elder, cherry *Prunus sp*, balsam poplar *Populus trichocarpa*, field maple, Leyland cypress *Cupressus x leylandii*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, grey willow, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and crack willow.
- 3.1.15 Larger trees (those trees specifically noted to have a diameter at 1.5m above ground level of > 15 cm) are target noted as 1 on Figure 1. Saplings and young trees are not mapped on Figure 1.

Man-made structures

- 3.1.16 As well as lengths of broken down fencing, and the post and rail fence along Skimmingdish Lane, this habitat includes a still-standing small tin hut in the northern part of the site, and a drainage pipe headwall where the hedgerow ditch at the south-eastern site boundary meets Skimmingdish Lane.

3.2 Fauna

Badgers

- 3.2.1 No badger setts were found within the site, though a single latrine was noted adjacent to a goat willow tree in the north-eastern part of the site (see Figure 1). It is possible that a worn path running through the site could also be used by badgers, though it is also evidently used by human traffic.

Bats

- 3.2.2 Within the main body of the site there are no trees with significant potential to support bats. However, the mature crack willow tree near the centre of the south-eastern boundary hedgerow (one of trees target noted 1 on Figure 1) has at least medium potential for use as a bat roost as a result of the presence of lateral cracks and splits as well as its dense ivy cover, which could easily conceal additional roosting opportunities. In addition, several of trees with dense ivy cover within the area of willow scrub could be considered to have low potential to be used by roosting bats.
- 3.2.3 Foraging opportunities for bats within the site and its immediate surroundings are limited, as the site is largely surrounded by arable fields and urban development. However, the green lane running along the site's south-eastern boundary may well be used by foraging and/or commuting bats (and contains additional potential tree-roosting sites beyond the site boundary), and the pasture field lying beyond the green lane, together with the stream on its far side, provide a potential foraging resource.

Great crested newts

- 3.2.4 Great crested newts are known to be present within the wider area, with the nearest known populations at Gavray Drive Meadows around 1 km to the south. Bicester Airfield, to the north, also has the potential to support the species in any artificial water features present at that site. However, the application site is relatively isolated from these or any other potential breeding ponds and it is assessed that the chance of the site being used as terrestrial habitat by this species is minimal.

Reptiles

- 3.2.5 The rough grassland with ruderals and an abundance of basking sites offers highly suitable habitat for common reptiles; common lizard and grass snake are known to be present in the locality and slow worm *Anguis fragilis* is often associated with former allotment sites. However the site is largely isolated within an area of arable land and built development, which reduces the chance of reptiles being present.
- 3.2.6 The corrugated sheets and other suitable pieces of debris within the site were checked for reptiles during the course of the survey. No reptiles were found, though it was assessed that it was too early in the year and too cold to carry out a reliable reptile survey.

Other fauna

- 3.2.7 There was evidence of rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, fox *Vulpes vulpes*, field vole *Microtus agrestis* and wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* activity within the site. In addition, a dead fox was found near to Skimmingdish Lane.
- 3.2.8 The range of bird species noted from the site during the survey was generally typical of the habitats present within the area. Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, great tit *Parus major*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, blackbird *Turdus*

merula, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus* were all noted, primarily within the areas of scrub. A kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* was observed hunting in the centre of the grassland area, and a buzzard *Buteo buteo* was seen flying over though not specifically using the site. Several of these species (e.g. dunnock) had already set up and were defending breeding territories on the site at the time of the survey.

3.2.9 Several anthills were noted within the grassland.

4 EVALUATION

4.1 Evaluation methodology

- 4.1.1 While some level of subjectivity is unavoidable when apportioning value to ecological features and resources, certain parameters and points of reference can be used to help ensure consistency. Those applied to the evaluation of the ecological resources within the site are explained below.
- 4.1.2 Sites already possessing statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations will have been subjected to some form of evaluation process in the past, and their importance defined at a geographical scale (e.g. international, national, local). For these, evaluation will generally reaffirm their qualifying attributes, or in some cases may identify where designation may no longer be appropriate.
- 4.1.3 Factors such as extent, naturalness, rarity, fragility and diversity are all relevant to the determination of ecological value, and for the evaluation of sites and habitat features outside designated sites, these and other criteria as described by Ratcliffe³, may be applied. Ratcliffe's criteria are integral to the procedure for selecting both Sites of Special Scientific Interest and many non-statutory designation systems in the UK, and therefore remain an accepted standard for site evaluation.
- 4.1.4 In applying these criteria, attention may be drawn to the relative scarcity or abundance of features within the survey area and in the wider geographical context. Some criteria are however absolute and not relative to scale. Ancient woodland, for example, is fragile irrespective of whether it is being considered in an international or local context. Similarly, the value of an otherwise poor habitat may be elevated if it is central to the survival of a rare species.
- 4.1.5 Where evaluation is important for the purposes of informing decisions related to land-use planning and development control, the above approach needs to be supplemented by consideration of whether individual species are subject to legal protection⁴, or whether habitats or species are present which have been identified as 'priorities' for biodiversity conservation in the UK⁵. Planning authorities have a statutory duty⁶ to further biodiversity objectives and the presence of such resources may be material to the determination of development control decisions⁷.
- 4.1.6 Finally, attention may be drawn to species not necessarily subject to legal protection or identified as a priority for biodiversity conservation, but which nonetheless have an

³ Ratcliffe (1977) 'A Nature Conservation Review'.

⁴ Principal legislation being the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) which implement the EC Habitats Directive. Some animals are protected under separate legislation (e.g. the Protection of Badgers Act 1992).

⁵ Biodiversity The UK Action Plan (1994), Command 2428 and subsequent Habitat and Species Action Plans.

⁶ Further to section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

⁷ Planning Policy Statement 9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* ODPM August 2005 (as supplemented by Circular 06/2005)

‘unfavourable’ conservation status as defined by the Red Data Book system⁸ or the Red and Amber lists for birds⁹, or which are otherwise known to be rare or scarce in a local or regional context.

- 4.1.7 Scales of comparison varying from the international to the context of the local area may be used to define the measure of importance attached to individual features. The definition of geographic terms can vary, but in this evaluation the geographic frame of reference contained within the IEEM guidelines¹⁰ is used.

4.2 Site evaluation

- 4.2.1 The site is not subject to any statutory nature conservation designation such as SSSI. The nearest such site, Stratton Audley Quarries SSSI, lies approximately 1.35 km to the north, and its designation is based on geological rather than biological interest.
- 4.2.2 The site is not currently subject to any non-statutory nature conservation designation, the nearest Local Wildlife Site being Gavray Drive Meadows LWS, the edge of which lies approximately 875 metres SSW of the site.
- 4.2.3 The site has been proposed for inclusion in Bicester Airfield LWS following surveys undertaken by the local Wildlife Trust in 2003. However, TVERC attached the following note to the desk study in regard to this potential designation:

“The boundary for Bicester Airfield is in need of revision. The site being looked at is in the Bicester Airfield boundary. However much of the south east corner appears to be arable land and allotments and most of this needs to be excluded from the site. The boundary also includes part of Skimmingdish Lane which needs to be removed as well. It’s an old pre TVERC boundary and the site hasn’t been properly looked at.”

- 4.2.4 The hedgerow forming the site’s south-eastern boundary does not have sufficient native woody species per 30m stretch to be considered species-rich, but is likely to meet the criteria of an ‘Important Hedgerow’ within the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 based on factors such as its antiquity and proximity to public rights of way. It also qualifies as a Habitat of Principal Importance, as listed by the Government further to its duties under section 74 of the CROW Act 2000, amended and updated by section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Hedgerows are also subject to a national BAP.
- 4.2.5 The presence of the naturalised species many-flowered rose within this hedgerow is of botanical interest (this being a species only scarcely recorded in Oxfordshire) but of little conservation significance.

⁸ Following the British Red Data books published by the JNCC/RSNC and the Nationally Notable (Nationally Scarce) categorisations recognised by the JNCC

⁹ Gregory et al (2002) The population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man: an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007. *British Birds* 95: 410-450.

¹⁰ Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2006) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom* (version 7 July 2006).

- 4.2.6 Arable land is subject to a local BAP in Oxfordshire, though this land lies outside the site redline.
- 4.2.7 Overall, the site is assessed as having limited ecological interest, though its value would increase should additional detailed surveys find evidence of any protected species within the site.
- 4.2.8 Though no reptiles were found during the course of the survey, the coarse grassland with ruderals is assessed as being highly suitable for use by grass snake, common lizard and/or slow worm. These commoner reptiles are subject to partial protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), are Species of Principal Importance and are all subject to national BAPs.
- 4.2.9 Selected trees within the site have low potential to be used by roosting bats, and the crack willow near the centre of the south-eastern hedgerow was assessed as having at least medium potential. The hedgerow and associated green lane, and the pasture and stream beyond, appear suitable to be used by bats for foraging and commuting. All species of bat found in Britain and any place they use for shelter or protection are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and also the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).
- 4.2.10 Though a badger latrine was found within the site, no badger setts were found.
- 4.2.11 It is not considered likely that great crested newts use the site during their terrestrial phase.
- 4.2.12 Several of the bird species recorded have been identified as conservation priority species placed on lists according to whether they have experienced over 50% declines (Red List birds) or 25 – 49% declines (Amber List birds) in the last twenty five years¹¹. Two Amber List birds were recorded within the site: kestrel and dunnock – the latter is species is subject to a national BAP and is a species of Principal Importance, but it remains common both locally and nationally and its presence on this site would be expected.

¹¹ Eaton, Brown, Noble, Musgrove, Hearn, Aebischer, Gibbons, Evans and Gregory (2009) *'Birds of Conservation Concern 3: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man'* British Birds 102: 296-341

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations currently impinging on the site. The site has been proposed for inclusion in a Local Wildlife Site (Bicester Airfield) following surveys undertaken by the local Wildlife Trust in 2003. However comments attached to the desk study return (see the evaluation section above) indicate that further survey work would need to be carried out by TVERC prior to it becoming subject to any designation, and also imply that it would not be included on review.
- 5.2 The course grassland within the site has the potential to be used by used by reptiles. For this reason, it is recommended that a reptile survey is carried out prior to commencement of development to ascertain any mitigation requirements necessary to ensure legal compliance.
- 5.3 It was possible to access the entirety of the site to search for badger setts, and no setts were found. Thus it is not considered necessary to undertake any further badger survey work.
- 5.4 The site's isolation from any suitable great crested newt breeding ponds renders it highly unlikely that any terrestrial-phase use of the site by this species occurs.
- 5.5 If the proposed development were to affect any trees within the area of willow scrub or along the hedgerow at the south-eastern boundary, it would be recommended to first survey them in detail to confirm the presence or absence of roosting bats. It is recommended that the boundary hedgerow is retained in any event and brought into appropriate conservation management to reinforce and diversify its structure and secure its future.
- 5.6 The only other potential ecological constraint identified on the site is the presence of nesting birds. All species of bird in Britain and their active nests, eggs and young are protected from damage or destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). To avoid legislative constraints relating to nesting birds, it would be recommended to carry out any work to existing vegetation outside the bird nesting season, which typically runs from March to July inclusive, though some bird species will nest all year round if conditions are suitable. If this is impracticable, it would be recommended to survey the vegetation prior to carrying out the work to ensure no active nests are present at the time. If an active nest is identified, it would need to remain *in situ* and unaffected until such time a resurvey had confirmed it as being inactive.

Figure 1:
Habitat Map

Key

- Application area
- 'Blue land'
- Course grassland with ruderals and scattered bramble
- Arable
- Tall ruderal
- Willow scrub
- Hedgerow
- Tree
- Cluster of trees
- Man-made structures
- Post and rail fence
- Target note
- Badger latrine

Habitat Map

Figure 1

Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester

E1599

March 2010

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Not to scale
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Appendix 1:
List of Higher Plant Species Recorded

Appendix 1: List of Higher Plant Species Recorded

Within Redline:

Common Name	Latin Name
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>
False oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>
Lords-and-ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
Michaelmas daisy	<i>Aster sp.</i>
A moss	<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Leyland cypress	<i>Cupressus x leylandii</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Tufted hair-grass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>
Great willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>
Hoary willowherb	<i>Epilobium parviflorum</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Tall fescue	<i>Festuca arundinacea</i>
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Hop	<i>Humulus lupulus</i>
Perforate St. John's-wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>
A moss	<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>
Field forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>
A forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis sp.</i>
A daffodil	<i>Narcissus sp.</i>

An evening primrose
Bristly ox-tongue
Balsam poplar
A cherry
Blackthorn
Dog rose
Many-flowered rose
Bramble
Raspberry
Cutleaf evergreen blackberry
Curled dock
Broad-leaved dock
Wood dock
Goat willow
Grey willow
Crack willow
Elder
Water figwort
Common ragwort
A comfrey
Stinging nettle
Sweet violet

Oenothera sp.
Picris echioides
Populus trichocarpa
Prunus sp.
Prunus spinosa
Rosa canina
Rosa multiflora
Rubus fruticosus agg.
Rubus idaeus
Rubus laciniatus
Rumex crispus
Rumex obtusifolius
Rumex sanguineus
Salix caprea
Salix cinerea agg.
Salix fragilis
Sambucus nigra
Scrophularia aquatica
Senecio jacobaea
Symphytum sp.
Urtica dioica
Viola odorata

Within Blueline:

A crucifer crop
Shepherd's-purse
Dove's-foot crane's-bill
Nipplewort
Annual mercury
Field speedwell
Annual meadow-grass
Chickweed

Brassica sp.
Capsella bursa-pastoris
Geranium molle
Lapsana communis
Mercurialis annua
Myosotis arvensis
Poa annua
Stellaria media