

Phase D5a, Heyford Park
Conditioned Bird Box Details and
Locations

On Behalf of:
The Dorchester Group

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Heyford Park is a former military base with the first buildings built in 1926 (Central Grid Reference SP 51432577), with various additions since then, especially when it was used as an American Air Base. This was decommissioned in 1994 and many of the buildings have been unoccupied since.
- 1.2 The site consists of a large complex building, surrounded by amenity grassland and hard-standing in the form of tennis courts, access roads and parking areas. The site has a number of mature trees across it.
- 1.3 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken to inform the planning decision on this Phase of the works, due to the local population of Great Crested Newts and potentially other protected species on the flying field.
- 1.4 The survey concluded that there is potential for nesting birds in the boundary trees. Works should avoid disturbance to nesting birds through timing or pre-works surveys.
- 1.5 To further enhance the site for birds it was suggested that eight bird boxes could be erected in retained trees. This was added as a condition within the planning permission.
- 1.6 This report details the type of bird boxes and identifies their locations, following a field visit in December 2014.

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 Heyford Park is the former RAF Base of Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire (Central Grid Reference SP 51432577). The base was originally built in 1926 and has had many additional buildings constructed up until the 1980s. The base was decommissioned in 1994 and many of the buildings have been empty since. However, the park has been increasingly used as a light industrial area around the former flying field, with occupied housing centrally to the south of Camp Road.
- 2.2 For the last ten years there have been plans to redevelop the site into mixed business and residential uses, divided roughly north and south of Camp Road, the majority of the housing to the south and most of the business areas to the north.
- 2.3 Planning permission, supported by an extended Phase I Habitat Survey, has been granted for Phase D5a in the north-east of the site where there are currently a number of light industrial units. A pre-commencement condition is to show details and locations of the eight bird boxes suggested as site enhancements for this phase.
- 2.4 The Dorchester Group commissioned 4 Acre Ecology Limited on 10th December 2014 to undertake a field visit to inspect the site for potential locations and prepare a brief report to discharge this condition.

Aims and Objectives

- 2.5 The aim of the survey was to determine where it would be best to place the nest boxes, suggesting the box types to be used, with the objective of fulfilling a pre-commencement condition.

About the Author

- 2.6 Mark Satinet has been working in the field of Wildlife Conservation and Ecology since 1992. 13 years at the Wildlife Trusts working on wider countryside habitat and species projects provided a good background in habitat surveys, species identification, habitat management advice to landowners and dealing with the public and media. He became the County Mammal Recorder for Wiltshire in 2000 and set up the Wiltshire Mammal Group in 2005, maintaining his links with the Wildlife Trusts through this voluntary work. He also is a voluntary Bat Warden for Natural England and has been an active member of the Wiltshire Bat Group since 2001.
- 2.7 Since 2006 he has been a consultant ecologist, first as a senior ecologist at a multi-disciplinary company for a year and then the principle ecologist running the ecology team in a specialised ecological firm for a further four years. He is a full member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and a Chartered Environmentalist. He now owns and runs his own company, 4 Acre Ecology Limited.

He holds disturbance licences for bats, Great Crested Newts, Dormice, Barn Owls and Shrews in both England and Wales, and has held development licences for Great Crested Newts, bats and Dormice.

3. Legislation and Planning Policy

3.1 There are a number of tiers of legislation protecting wildlife in England and Wales. The highest tier is for those species protected by European Legislation, such as the Dormouse, Great Crested Newt, Otter and all species of bat. These are known as European Protected Species (EPS), which gain their protection from the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Habitat Regulations) 2010, whereby under section 41 it is an offence to

- deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS
- deliberately disturb or take/destroy the eggs of an EPS
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS

3.2 Nationally protected species are either fully protected (e.g. Water Vole) or partially protected (e.g. Adder or Smooth Newt) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 and amendments, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. Under the WCA it is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, take or destroy any wild bird egg or take, damage or destroy any nest while it is in use or being built
- intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturb dependent young of such a bird
- intentionally or recklessly at any other time take, damage, destroy or otherwise interfere with any nest habitually used by any wild bird included in Schedule A1
- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take from the wild or possess all or any part of a Schedule 5 species
- intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy any structure or place which a schedule 5 species uses for shelter or protection, or disturb a schedule 5 species while it is occupying such a place
- obstruct access to any structure or place which a schedule 5 species uses for shelter or protection
- intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any wild plant included in Schedule 8

3.3 The CRoW Act 2000 added the term recklessly after intentionally in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and introduced a maximum custodial sentence of 6 months for offences.

- 3.4 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) made provision about bodies concerned with the natural environment and rural communities and in connection with wildlife, sites of special scientific interest, National Parks and the Broads. Section 41 established a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. This is known as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list.
- 3.5 Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a Badger and damage, destroy or obstruct a badger sett, cause a dog to enter a Badger sett or disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett.
- 3.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 states that "in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development" and "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged".
- 3.7 In general terms the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
 - recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
 - minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 3.8 However, the "presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined", but "development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted".

4. Results and Discussion

- 4.1 The field visit was undertaken on 16th December 2014 to inspect the site and determine the best location for the bird boxes.
- 4.2 The site is mainly hard standing and derelict buildings, but there is a significant area of retained habitat to the south of the site, mainly east of the new access road, but with some to the west, lying to the south of the retained office block that will be adjacent to the access road. There is also a small area of retained habitat and trees towards the north-western corner of the site (See Figure 2).
- 4.3 All the trees are in clusters and have been managed to remove the lower branches from the bottom 4-6m. This provides large bare trunks where nest boxes can be attached, with clear flight lines to them. The exceptions to this are the trees in the north-western corner that have varying degrees of Ivy growth (See Figure 2).
- 4.4 It is therefore proposed that the north-western cluster of trees has two nest boxes, the central southern cluster has four and the western southern cluster has two nest boxes erected on them (See Figure 1 for box locations).
- 4.5 These locations are proposed to allow access to the best retained habitat on the site (amenity grassland and trees) with the open flying field of semi-improved grass immediately to the north and east of the northern cluster.
- 4.6 Although bird boxes can be sited near to the ground, in an area of public open space it is recommended that they are installed at a height of 3-4m to minimise the likelihood that they are tampered with.
- 4.7 Many bird boxes are made of wood and are perfectly good boxes in gardens, but as this is public open space it is recommended that woodcrete boxes (mainly supplied by Schwegler, (See Figure 3) are used to give a potential life span of over 25 years.
- 4.8 It is mainly common bird species that are found on site, such as Blackbird, Great Tit and Robin. Therefore it is recommended that half the boxes are open fronted, which are good for species such as Robins and Wrens, while the other half are standard boxes with small openings that attract birds such as Tit, Sparrow and Nuthatch (See Figure 3).

5. Figures

Figure 1: Bird Box Locations

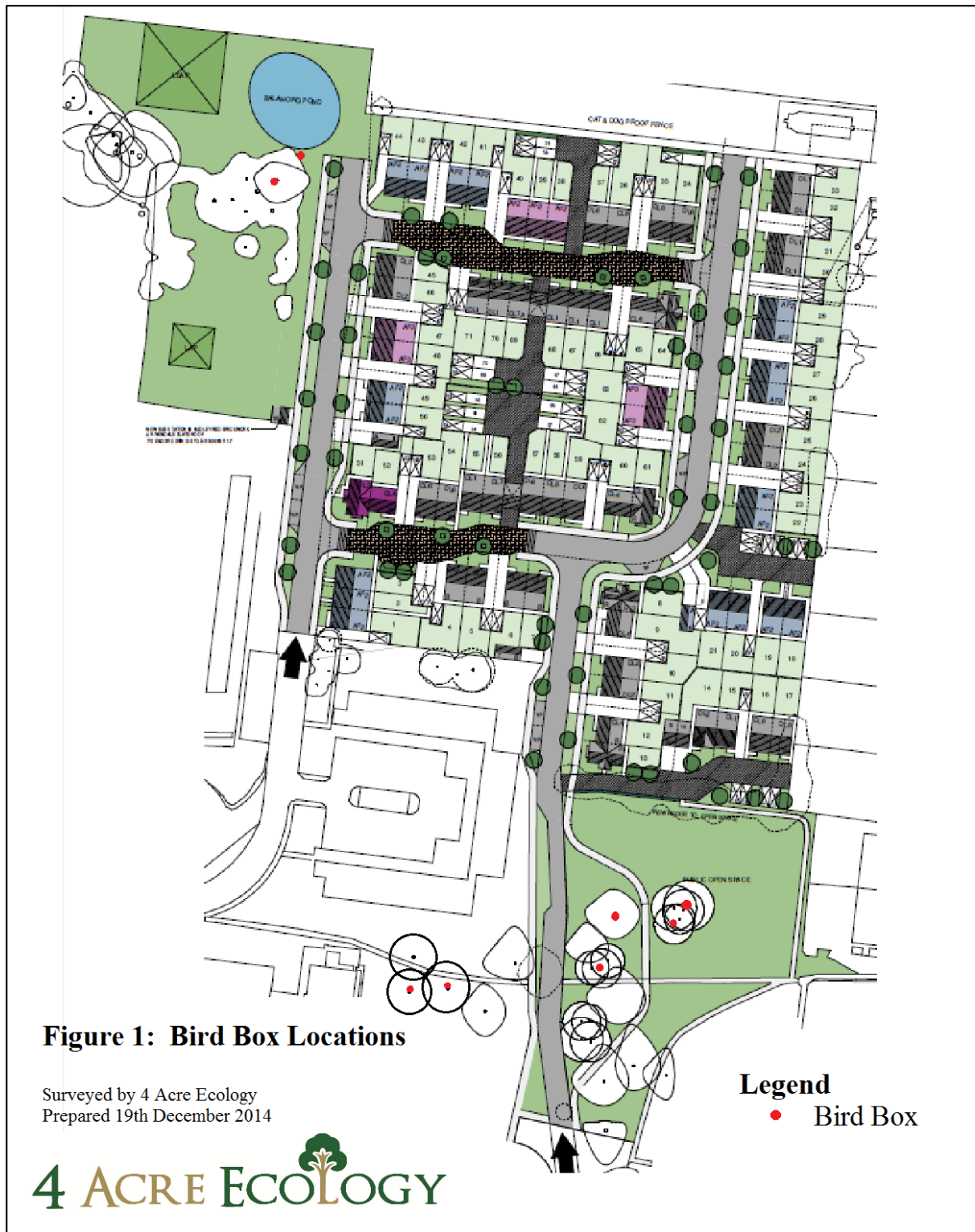


Figure 2: Site Images



1. Trees south of the retained Office Building



2. Clump at the north-western end of the site



3. Main clump of trees in the south of the site, east of the retained offices

Figure 3: Bird Box Design

Schwegler Bird Boxes



Tit/Sparrow/Nuthatch



Wren/Robin/Wagtail

6. References

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Available on-line at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents> accessed 14/11/10

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