

11<sup>th</sup> July 2017



Vikki Roe  
CALA Homes (Chiltern) Limited  
Gemini House  
Mercury Park  
Wooburn Green  
Buckinghamshire  
HP10 0HH

Cotefield Farm, Bodicote. Ecological walkover for proposed swale and outfall ditch.

Dear Vikki,

The purpose of this letter is to provide the results of an ecological walkover survey for a proposed swale and outfall ditch at the aforementioned development site.

The survey was carried out by Daniel Wood of ACD Environmental Ltd. Daniel is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM), Director and Principal Ecologist for ACD Environmental. Daniel has 11 years' experience working for commercial consultancies and specialises in European Protected Species legislation and mitigation. Daniel holds survey licences for bats (all species), barn owls, hazel dormice, badgers and great crested newts.

CALA Homes recently made an application for an alternative form of drainage which feeds into an existing ditch. This ditch is to be widened and planted to form a reed bed.

The Case Officer for the application has requested that CALA provide details of the planting in the reed bed. Subsequently, a landscape proposal for the reedbed has been produced (drawing CALA18397-12).

In addition, the application requires the removal of an 8m wide corridor of trees for the drainage easement. The Council's ecologist has requested an updated ecology assessment survey for this area only. This is the purpose of this letter.

Plantation woodland

The 8m easement concerns a belt of mature plantation woodland which runs north-east to south-west, abutting the development site at the northernmost point. A footpath/cycle path runs through the middle of the plantation belt. The south side of the woodland belt comprises a managed hawthorn hedge.

The plantation belt comprises a mixture of silver birch, ash, alder, Scots pine and beech, with an understorey of hazel, field maple and hawthorn. The trees within the proposed 8m easement include several of the above species, totalling approximately 10-15 trees.

Each tree was inspected visually for potential bat roost features (PRFs) in accordance with the Bat Tree Habitat Key (Henry L. Andrews 2016) and the Bat Survey Good Practice Guidelines (Hundt L. 2012). Typically, PRFs comprise features including hazard beams, frost cracks, subsidence, shearing and helical splits, lightning, strikes, impact shatters, desiccation

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fissures, transverse snaps, lifting bark and welds.



**Photograph 1: Woodland belt edge. Red stakes demarcate the proposed easement.**



**Photograph 2: Inside woodland belt looking north**



**Photograph 3: Inside woodland belt looking south**



**Photograph 4: Inside woodland belt showing existing headwall and ditch**



**Photograph 5: Inside woodland belt showing footpath**



**Photograph 6: Managed hedge on southern edge of woodland belt**

No PRFs were observed during the survey. Two birds' nests were found within the proposed easement but neither contained eggs or chicks.

We do not advocate any further survey work for bats at this point, provided that the works are carried out within 12 months. A pre-felling birds nest check should be carried out in the work is carried out during the nesting bird season.

Prior to hedgerow removal, we would advocate a visual search for hazel dormice by a suitably qualified ecologist.

### Proposed swale/reedbed

The proposed swale and reedbed currently contains a defunct, gappy hawthorn hedgerow and a shallow ditch. The ditch is piped underground where it crosses the arable field, and emerges at the location of the proposed swale where it leaves the field and meets the hedgerow. The ditch was flowing at the time of the survey but was very shallow and covered with a dense stand of willowherb. The eastern bank of the ditch contains several mature oaks, one of which marks the southern extent of the proposed ditch. The oak trees have PRFs which could be used by roosting bats, but the trees will be retained and no further survey work is advocated on this basis.



**Photograph 7: Defunct hedgerow adjacent to proposed swale**



**Photograph 8: Ditch at proposed swale location**



**Photograph 9: Mature oak adjacent to proposed swale**



**Photograph 10: Offsite fishing lake**

The proposed swale is approximately 30m from an offsite lake (Photograph 10) which is used as a recreational fishing lake (an angler was present during the survey).

Given the presence of fish and the unsuitability of the existing ditch, it is considered reasonably unlikely that great crested newts (GCN) or water voles would be adversely affected the proposed swale/reedbed.

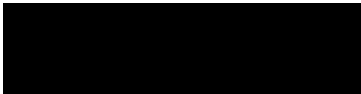
The proposed swale location currently comprises an existing ditch and a 2m margin of tall, coarse grassland and ruderal vegetation. Given the potential for small numbers of reptiles to be present (particularly slow worms and grass snakes), we advocate some sensitive strimming prior to any excavation work, to displace reptiles without causing harm.

### Summary

We advocate a pre-felling visual inspection for hazel dormice, and sensitive strimming for reptiles, prior to any work related to the proposed swale/reedbed.

I trust the above information is sufficient to address the requirement. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely



Daniel Wood

Principal Ecologist and Director for ACD Environmental Ltd.