

1908 SD Bodicote Phase 1 Habitat update letter

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Blossom Fields, Bodicote – Update Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The Phase 1 Habitat survey relating to Blossom Fields, Bodicote, near Banbury was undertaken on 12th December 2017. The aim of the survey was to update and verify the Phase 1 Habitat survey undertaken in 2014 by RPS.

The results of the 2014 Phase 1 survey remain current with the exceptions of the following elements:

- The major part of the site which was in active arable production in 2014 is currently uncultivated and is currently fallow and recently colonised by ruderal, weed species. This is not ecologically material but as this vegetation could be used by ground nesting birds it will be necessary to clear this vegetation outside the bird breeding season (ie clearance will generally be appropriate between September and February inclusive, depending on seasonal variation).
- The eastern part of the site has been disturbed for installation of drainage works and a 15m wide gap cut through the western peripheral plantation belt (mixed plantation woodland).
- The tree shown as a sycamore in the Phase 1 Habitat survey (Target Note 1) is an oak and the tree shown as an oak (Target Note 2) is a sycamore. The species identification is however correct in the Bat Survey and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment.
- The sycamore (Target Note 2) is a roosting site for a pair of buzzards and there is a nest (possibly buzzard but more likely crow or another smaller species) in the tree, along with cavities potentially suitable for roosting bats and hole nesting bird species (owls and starlings etc.) This tree is currently due for removal and due to this possibility it should be inspected by a licensed bat worker prior to removal (which should avoid the bird breeding season – as above). This should include careful investigation / removal of the ivy growth in the lower part of the tree and is necessary in order to avoid contravention of UK and EU legislation. In the worst case scenario that bats were found to be

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present consultation would be necessary with Natural England and a suitable 'way forward' agreed, which is likely to involve obtaining an EPS (European Protected Species) licence.

- As set out in the 2014 Phase 1 Habitat Survey, it is also necessary to ensure that any other removal / works to vegetation that could be used by nesting birds should avoid the bird breeding season. The exception to this is that if the scheme programme necessitates removal during the bird breeding season, the vegetation can be inspected by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the removal / works and if deemed to be free of active nests, even during the bird breeding season, can be removed. However, if an active nest is found in this process, the works would need to be delayed until the young birds had fledged the nest.

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