

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Police Fields, Horsted Keynes, West Sussex

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Strutt & Parker to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) Police Fields, Horsted Keynes, West Sussex, RH17 7BL.
- 1.2 This report presents the results of The Ecology Partnership's surveys in and around the site, which aims specifically to assess the site's potential to support protected species and protected habitats that may be affected by the proposed development. Potential mitigation measures and recommendations for the site are included within this report.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this report sets out the methodologies of the Ecology Partnership's surveys. In section 3, the results of the surveys are presented. Discussions and implications for development are found in section 4, including general site enhancements. Conclusions drawn from the report are presented in section 5.

Site Context and Status

- 1.4 The site is situated off Danehill Lane on the eastern edge of the village of Horsted Keynes, West Sussex (TQ 38841 28089). The site covers approximately 3.2ha and comprises fields bounded by hedgerows. The surrounding area consists of medium density housing to the west and further agricultural land to the east.
- 1.5 The aerial photograph below (Figure 1) shows the site and its immediate surroundings.The red line depicts the approximate site boundary and survey area.



Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary

Description of Proposed Development

1.6 The proposals currently involve the development of residential housing, the number and location are which are yet to be finalised.

Planning Policies

1.7 National and local planning policies may have an effect on the proposed development. The following paragraphs identify relevant planning policies and discuss these in the context of the site.

- 1.8 Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006), "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". In order to comply with this 'Biodiversity Duty', planning decisions must ensure that they adequately consider the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development.
- 1.9 In compliance with Section 41 of the NERC Act, the Secretary of State has published a list of species and habitats considered to be of principle importance for conserving biodiversity. These were known as BAP habitats and species. The UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain an important and valuable reference certainly at county levels. However, the UK Post 2010 Biodiversity Framework (published 2012) has succeeded BAP. It was produced by JNCC and Defra, on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group (4CBG), through which the environment departments of all four governments in the UK work together to achieve the 'Aichi Biodiversity Targets' and the aims of the EU biodiversity strategy.
- 1.10 National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Section 11 of the document is entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'. This section highlights the following:

"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."
- 1.11 In addition to this, the following paragraphs are also considered to be relevant:

"In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework."

"Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land."

1.12 The site falls under the jurisdiction of the Mid Sussex District Council. The Mid Sussex District Plan is currently under review and due for formal adoption in 2017. Until then, the Mid Sussex Local Plan (2004) is the document by which planning applications will be assessed. Relevant policy is detailed below.

Policy C5 - Areas of Importance for Nature Conservation

Proposals for development or changes of use of management within Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodlands or to other sites or areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological importance, including wildlife corridors will be subject to rigorous examination, and only permitted where the proposal, by virtue of design and layout, minimises the impact on features of nature conservation importance. Proposals should take advantage of opportunities for habitat creation wherever possible. The weight to be attached to nature conservation interests will reflect the relative significance of designations. Special scrutiny will be applied to those sites which are statutorily designated.

Policy C6 - Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

Development resulting in the loss of woodlands, hedgerows and trees which are important in the landscape, or as natural habitats, or historically, will be resisted.

1.13 The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure compliance with national and local plan policies. The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM 2013) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practise for Planning and Development.

2.0 Methodology

Desktop Study

2.1 A desktop study search was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and an internet-based aerial mapping service (maps.google.co.uk) was used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features (ponds, woodlands etc.) within the wider landscape. Records for the site and local area (up to 2km) were purchased from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.2 An extended preliminary ecological appraisal was undertaken on 7th July 2017 by ecologist Joe Bullard BSc (Hons) MSc GradCIEEM. The surveyor identified the habitats present following the standard 'Phase 1 habitat survey' auditing method developed by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC). The site was surveyed on foot and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on an appropriately scaled map (JNCC 2010). In addition, the dominant plant species in each habitat were recorded, as was any evidence of protected species.

Badger Survey

- 2.3 A badger survey was undertaken at the site to assess if badgers were using the area and if any setts were located on the site and 30m away from the site that might constrain development. The evaluation of badger activity was based on methodology developed for the National Survey of Badgers (Creswell *et al.* 1990) and includes searching for badger field signs such as setts, badger pathways, tracks (pawprints), dung piles with latrines, badger hairs and feeding signs such as snuffle holes.
- 2.4 During the survey, all habitats potentially suitable for badgers were systematically examined for evidence of badger activity including:

- Setts: several sett types may be present within a social group territory, ranging from a single hole to numerous interconnecting tunnels. Setts can be categorised into main, annexe, subsidiary and outlier (Wilson *et al.* 1997).
- Latrine sites: badgers characteristically deposit dung in pits, which may be located along the boundaries and within the social group territory. These sites serve as means of inter- and intra-group communication.
- Paths and runs: well used routes between setts and/or foraging areas. Often used by generations of badgers.
- Snuffle holes: areas of disturbed vegetation often formed by badgers foraging for ground dwelling invertebrates such as earthworms and larvae and the underground storage organs of plants.
- Hair: often found among spoil and bedding outside entrances to setts or snagged on fences (such as barbwire) along well-used runs.
- Footprints: easily distinguishable from other large mammal species. Often found along paths and runs or in spoil outside sett entrances.

Tree Assessment for Bats

- 2.5 The trees on site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Bats can use trees to rest, give birth, raise young and/or hibernate. The trees were assessed visually for evidence of bats as well as for features that increase the likelihood of roosting bats, such as the following:
 - Woodpecker holes, natural cracks and rot holes in trunks and branches;
 - Frost cracks;
 - Trunk and branch splits;
 - Hollow sections of trunk and branches;
 - Loose bark;
 - Cavities beneath old root buttresses and coppice stools;
 - Dense epicormic growth;
 - Dense ivy cover.
- 2.6 Veteran trees typically exhibit many of these features and should usually be regarded as sites with clear potential, but any tree possessing one or more such feature, may host

bats. Any tree species can be suitable but oak and beech often seem to be the preferred options. However, bats rarely restrict themselves to one tree. They change their roost sites frequently, sometimes every two to three days, looking for small differences in temperature and humidity.

- 2.7 Roosts of bats in trees may be identified from the following field signs:
 - Black stains beneath cracks, splits and other features where bat droppings have fallen;
 - Dark marks at entrance points where bats have rubbed against the wood and left natural body oils;
 - Feeding remains beneath roosts, such as insect wings;
 - Chattering of bats;
 - Bat droppings under access points;
 - Scratch marks around a feature (cavity or split) caused by bat claws;
 - Urine stains below the entrance or end of split;
 - Large roosts or regularly used sites may produce an odour;
 - Flies around the entrance, attracted by the smell of guano.
- 2.8 Trees scheduled for arboricultural work should also be assessed, and may be categorised to relate the value of their features to recommended actions (Table 1). This approach allows trees to be graded according to their potential to support bat roosts. Trees may be assessed as having the potential to support bats (from an individual to a larger roost) even if no bats have been found.

Table 1: Protocol for visual inspection of trees to assess their value to bats - taken fromTable 4.1 within the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rdedition' (Bat Conservation Trust 2016)

Suitability	Roosting habitat description			
Negligible Negligible habitat features on-site likely to be used by roosting ba				
	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features			
Low	but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very			
	limited roosting potential.			
Modorato	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats			
Moderate	due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding			

	habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable
Lliah	for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and
rign	potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter,
	protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

Habitat Suitability for Reptiles

- 2.9 Habitat surveys were carried out to assess the potential of the site to hold populations of reptile species. This involved looking for the presence of factors that would increase the suitability of the site for reptiles such as:
 - Scrub and grassland (long sward) mosaic across the site;
 - Features that can be potential hibernation sites for common reptiles such as log piles;
 - Grass tussocks within the grassland that can act as shelter and burrowing sites;
 - Water bodies or damp places on site (grass snakes);
 - Compost heaps or decaying vegetation (slow worms);
 - Features that can act as refugia on the ground such as disused roofing felt.

Other Protected Species

- 2.10 The site was also inspected for indications of the presence of other protected species, as follows:
 - Relevant habitat for dormice such as dense deciduous woodland, coppice and thick shrubbery
 - Ponds and associated habitat suitable to support great crested newts
 - The presence of ditches for water voles
 - The presence of fresh water stream/rivers for otters
 - Suitable nesting places for birds
 - Other potential protected species

Limitations

2.11 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation

and prediction of the natural environment. The site was visited over the period of one site visit, as such seasonal variations cannot be observed and potentially only a selection of all species that potentially occur within the site have been recorded. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.

- 2.12 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time when the survey was carried out. Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of this assessment, it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.
- 3.0 Results

Desktop Study

- 3.1. A 2km data search was requested from The Sussex Biological Information Centre (SxBRC), the results of which are shown in Table 2. Information on designated sites, such as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and protected species records have been included. Records have been included from the last ten years, with the closest record and the most recent records included. Further information from the data request is included in Appendix 3.
- 3.2 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any statutory designated site, the nearest is Freshfield Lane Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approximately 1.2km south. In addition to this, Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) is located 3.25km northeast of the site boundary. This forest carries a number of designations including Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). No further internationally designated sites are located within 10km of the site.
- 3.3 A single non-statutory designated site lies within a 2km radius, Birchgrove Fish Ponds approximately 900m north of the site.

3.4 The site does not lie within or adjacent to priority deciduous woodland, the nearest compartment is approximately 90m south of the site boundary, this is also designated as ancient semi-natural (See figure 2).



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Figure 2: Priority habitats within a 2km radius of the site. Dark green shadings indicate priority deciduous woodland, horizontal brown hatching indicates ancient replanted woodland and vertical brown shadings indicate ancient semi-natural woodland.

3.5 A 2km radius data search was requested from the Sussex Environmental Records Centre.Notable protected species from this search are outlined below (Table 2). Only records from within the last ten years and those closest to site have been included.

Species	Status	Record	Record
Creat grapted mount	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1091 ac	distance	year
Triturus cristatus	amonded) Schedule 5: Bern Convention	1.7km wost	2014
11111115 CHStutus	Appendix 2: European Protected Species:	1.7 KIII West	
	Habitats Directive Append 2 & 4: NERC Act		
	(2006) Section 41		
Hazal Darmausa	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1081 ac	Ammanimatalır	2014
Muscardinus	amondod) Schodulo 5: Concernation of	Approximately	2014
avellanarius	Libitate and Creatice Decidations (2010)	2km west	
aoenanar no	Figure 1 and Species Regulations (2010)	A	2012
	Schedule 2; Habitats and Species Directive	Approximately	2013
	(1992) Annex 4; NERC Act (2006) Section 41;	1.3km north	
	Bern Convention Appendix 3	A 1	2015
Grass Snake	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as	Approximately	2015
	amended); NERC Act (2006) Section 41; Bern	1.3km east	
	Convention Appendix 3		
Slow Worm	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as	Approximately	2015
Anguis fragilis	amended) Schedule 5; NERC Act (2006)	1.3km east	
	Section 41; Bern Convention Appendix 3		
Adder	NERC Act (2006) Section 41; Wildlife and	Approximately	2014
Vipera berus	Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule	2km east	
	5; Bern Convention Appendix 3		
Common	Conservation of Habitats and Species	Approximately	2016
Pipistrelle	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	550m	
Pipistrellus	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southwest	
pipistrellus	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		
Soprano Pipistrelle	Conservation of Habitats and Species	Approximately	2016
Pipistrellus	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	550m	
pygmaeus	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southwest	
	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		
Noctule	Conservation of Habitats and Species	Approximately	2016
Nyctalus noctula	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	550m	
	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southwest	
	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		
Serotine	Conservation of Habitats and Species	Approximately	2016
Eptesicus serotinus	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	550m	
	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southwest	

Table 2: Notable species recorded	l within 2km	of site over the	last 10 years
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	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		
Brown long-eared	Brown long-eared Conservation of Habitats and Species		2014
bat	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	1.4km	
Plecotus auritus	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southeast	
	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		
Whiskered bat	Conservation of Habitats and Species	Approximately	2011
Myotis mystacinus	Regulations (2010) Schedule 2; Habitat and	1.2km	
	Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	southeast	
	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended)		
	Schedule 5		

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

3.6 The site was comprised of two fields of tall semi-improved grassland largely bounded by tree lines and patches of scrub. The site contained a public footpath through the centre.

Semi-improved grassland

3.7 The site contained two fields of tall semi-improved grassland, the species composition was similar across the site, species identified included perennial rye (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), field sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), rough meadow grass (*Poa trivilais*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

Scrub

3.8 Patches of scrub were identified across the site, the dominant species was bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), other species included hazel (*Corylus avellana*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), birch (*Betula pendula*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), hedge woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), cleaver (*Gallium aparine*) and common lime (*Tillia x europaea*).

Tree line

- 3.9 The site was bounded almost entirely by species rich tree lines, species identified included hazel, oak (*Quercus robur*), cherry (*Prunus avium*), bramble, dog rose (*Rosa canina*), elder, birch, Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and privet (*Ligustrum sp.*).
- 3.10 The southeast boundary contained a number of additional species, including sweet chestnut (*Casanea sativa*), beech (*Fagus sylvaticus*), lime and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).

Ornamental hedgerow

3.11 A garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) hedgerow marked a section of the northern site boundary.

Protected Species

Badgers

3.12 No badger setts were identified within the site boundary, small mammal holes found onsite were identified as rabbit warren due to their size and the presence of droppings (See target note T4). A handful of mammal paths and push-throughs were identified across the site and within the hedgerows.

Bats

3.13 The majority of trees on site were either of insufficient age and/or size to provide roosting opportunities for bats. An oak to the north (See target note T1) contained a number of holes on limbs and the main trunk as well as a covering of ivy which may have concealed further potential roost features, this tree was considered to contain 'moderate' potential for roosting bats. The southern boundary tree line contained a

mature oak (See target note T5), while no specific features were identified it was of a sufficient size and age, large areas of the trunk were also concealed by ivy. This tree was considered to contain 'low' potential for roosting bats.

3.14 The tree lines on site may provide foraging opportunities for bats in the local area and connects the site to an extensive network of hedgerows and woodland to the south.

Dormice

- 3.15 The treelines and scrub provided optimal foraging habitat for dormice, featuring a dense layered structure and a variety of species of value to dormice, including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, honeysuckle and bramble.
- 3.16 A nut search was undertaken below a stand of hazel coppice on-site (See target note T3). A number of hazelnuts identified featured teeth marks typical of those provided by dormice, it is therefore considered that dormice are likely to be using the habitats on site.

Great Crested Newts

3.17 There were no waterbodies on site but two ponds were identified within a 250m radius of the site using Ordnance Survey imagery (see figure 3). Pond P1 is situated within an arable field approximately 75m north on the opposite side of Danehill Road. Pond P2 is situated approximately 130m east within a courtyard. Both ponds were situated within private land and inaccessible to survey or confirm their presence in-situ.



Figure 3: Location of ponds within 250m of the red line boundary

- 3.18 The habitats on-site comprised of tall semi-improved grassland, treelines and scrub, all of which provide good opportunities for terrestrial phase GCNs.
- 3.19 The records obtained from SBRC indicate the presence of GCNs in approximately 1.7km to the southwest on the opposite side of the village of Horsted Keynes.

Reptiles

3.20 The majority of the site was comprised of tall semi-improved grassland, a habitat considered suitable for reptiles, providing good foraging opportunities as well as cover from predators. The edges of the grassland in particular were considered highly suitable owing to the structural diversity offered by the combination of scrub, taller grassland

and shorter rabbit grazed patches. It is therefore considered possible that reptiles are using the habitats on-site.

Other Species

- 3.21 The trees, hedgerows and shrubs on site have the potential to support nesting birds. Several common species were seen and heard on site at the time of the survey, including robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) and blackbird (*Turdus merula*).
- 3.22 The site does not support habitats which are considered to be suitable for other protected species, such as water voles or otters.

4.0 Discussion

Designated sites

- 4.1 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designations, the nearest statutory designated site is Freshfield Lane SSSI approximately 2.4km south. In addition to this, Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) is located 3.25km northeast of the site boundary.
- 4.2 The current proposals are yet to be finalised but given the distance and lack of connectivity to any statutory designations, it is considered there will be no direct impacts as a result of any proposals and this aspect is planning policy C5 is not considered further.

Ashdown Forest SPA, SAC and SSSI

4.3 The Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) is a network of heathland, woodland and grassland sites which are designated for their ability to provide the required habitat for the internationally important bird species of nightjar and Dartford warbler. This area is protected by the Habitats Directive (EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural and Semi-Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) and the Habitats Regulations (The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994).

- 4.4 In Great Britain, the Habitats Regulations implement the requirements of the Habitats Directive. The Regulations aim to protect sites in the UK that have rare or important habitats and species, such as the Ashdown Forest SPA, in order to safeguard biodiversity. Under these Regulations, the LPA have a duty to assess whether there is a risk of any plan or proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the SPA.
- 4.5 The European Commission has issued guidance on the HRA process, 'Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment (2001)'. This guidance identifies a four-stage process for the assessment of the effects of projects on European Sites. The Habitats Regulations require competent authorities to carry out appropriate assessment in certain circumstances where a plan or project affects a Natura (European) site.
- 4.6 The site lies approximately 3.25km southwest of the Ashdown Forest SPA, SAC and SSSI and therefore is included within the precautionary 7km zone of influence outlined by Mid Sussex Council. This zone was set up as development within this area was considered to have the potential to increase visitor numbers and therefore indirect impacts on this protected area, such as increased disturbance of ground-nesting birds and increased levels of pollution from cars.
- 4.7 New evidence on the impacts of nitrogen on the SAC have been published (March 2017). Surveys and monitoring of the nitrogen levels and into account existing levels of traffic and development commitments that are in place indicates there is already an unacceptable level of impact from nitrogen deposition in the areas close to the forest roads. As such it is now considered that the development of a site must demonstrate that there will be no more vehicle emissions than currently present along the affected roads in the SAC. This will be addressed in a separate document.
- 4.8 Residential developments within the precautionary 7km are required to make two separate financial contributions for each property built. These contributions go towards the prevision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM). For SANG, the contribution per property is

dependant upon the number of bedrooms. As the proposals are only at outline stage it is unclear what will be required in terms of contributions.

- 4.9 Given the distance of the site from Ashdown Forest, it is considered the development will not result in any direct impacts on any of the associated SSSIs, nor will any proposals result in the isolation or fragmentation of habitats which may form wider landscape linkages.
- 4.10 Indirect impacts such as changes in hydrology, changes in light levels are all considered to be of negligible interest in terms of the wider landscape due to the nature and the size of the development and the distances between the site and designated sites or habitats of principle importance.
- 4.11 It is the indirect impacts of recreational pressure and nitrogen levels due to changes in road use (including increase number of car movements) will have to be considered as part of the application. It is Mid Sussex District Council that is the competent authority that will have to consider whether this site would require an HRA.

Habitats

- 4.12 There are several units of priority deciduous woodland within 2km of the site, many of which are also designated ancient semi-natural and/or ancient re-planted woodland. The closest of which, Swithe Wood ancient semi-natural woodland, is located approximately 90m south of the site. Natural England's standing advice for development which is close to ancient woodland, recommends that a 15m buffer be established between ancient woodland and any form of development to ensure trees and associated edge habitats are protected.
- 4.13 It is considered that the ancient woodland will not be impacted directly by the proposed development and that development will be undertaken over 15m away from the ancient woodland boundary. The woodland is off site and therefore the development will not involve any habitat loss or fragmentation or isolation. As the woodland is situated on private land it is also considered there would be no increased recreational pressure as a result of any development.

- 4.14 The habitats on site are common and widespread throughout the local area and the UK as a whole. The site is largely comprised of tall semi-improved grassland bounded by treelines. The treelines contained a diverse array tree species and considered to be of significant ecological value, providing excellent habitat for dormice, foraging bats and nesting bird as well as connecting the site to an extensive local network of woodland and hedgerows to the south. It is therefore recommended this habitat be retained in line with local planning policies C5 and C6. While the grassland was relatively species poor, it was still considered to provide some opportunities for protected species, namely reptiles. None of the plant species identified on-site were considered rare.
- 4.15 The use of the habitats within the red boundary have been assessed for their potential to support a number of protected species. These are discussed individually below.

Protected Species

Badgers

- 4.16 While no direct evidence of badgers such as setts or latrines was identified on site, mammal paths and push-throughs were identified, it is therefore possible that badgers may use the habitats on site to forage or commute across.
- 4.17 While the foraging and commuting habitat of badgers is not legally protected, precautions can be taken to during the construction process to ensure no harm comes to badgers using the site. It is recommended that any excavations and trenches associated with construction are either covered at night or supplemented with a means of escape for any badgers that may fall into the excavation whilst foraging. Any open pipes or conduits laid should be blocked off each night to prevent badgers from entering them. If possible, construction work should only take place between dawn and dusk with no late evening work to reduce possible disturbance.

4.18 It is always recommended that badger update surveys are undertaken across the site prior to any development works and/or if there is a lapse in time between the survey and development as badgers may move onto the site in the intervening period.

Bats

- 4.19 Two mature oak trees were identified on-site that were considered to have potential to support roosting bats, both of these trees also featured a dense ivy covering. It is recommended that all trees be retained, should this not be possible then, where present, the ivy covering should be removed carefully by hand in order to identify any potential roost features that may be obstructed from view. Should this not reveal any further potential roost features, then soft felling is recommended as a suitable method of removal for the oak tree along the southern boundary (Target note T5). The oak tree on the northern boundary was considered to contain 'moderate' potential for roosting bats owing to the numerous woodpecker holes, should this tree require removal then further emergence/re-entry surveys will be required.
- 4.20 The hedgerows bounding the site are likely to provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. These features also help to connect the site to the wider landscape, ensuring that bats can move with ease across the area using the linear features for shelter, protection and opportunistic foraging. These features should therefore be maintained and enhanced where possible.
- 4.21 According to Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, it is important that proportionality is employed when recommending further survey work for bat species on a proposed development site. As stated within section 8.2.7 of the latest survey guidelines (2016), the following points need to be taken into account with regard to planning activity surveys:
 - Likelihood of bats being present;
 - Likely species concerned;
 - Number of individuals;
 - Type of habitat affected;
 - Predicted impacts of the proposed development on bats;

- Type and scale of proposed development.
- 4.22 It is considered likely that bats use the tree lines bounding the site, this habitat provides good foraging opportunities for the majority of UK bat species. The site also features good connectivity to any extensive areas of woodland habitat to the south and east, it is therefore considered likely bats may use the site to commute across.
- 4.23 The records obtained from SBRC indicate the presence of largely common species such as common and soprano pipistrelle and noctules in the vicinity of the site. Certainly, no known roosts of Annex 1 species such as Barbastelle or Bechstein lie within proximity to the site.
- 4.24 As the proposals are yet to be finalised, it is unclear what habitat features will be impacted or lost as a result of any development. The habitats of value to bats are the tree lines bounding the fields and site, the grassland is considered to be of low value to bats. It is likely that areas trees and scrub will require removal to facilitate site access, further surveys are therefore recommended to determine the level of use by bats as well as to determine which species. Provided development is retained largely to the areas of grassland and a sensitive lighting scheme is put in place, it is considered the impacts upon bat commuting and foraging routes would be relatively low. In the scenario, it is recommended one transect survey per season from Spring to Autumn would be required in line with BCT survey guidelines. However, should significant areas of the bounding trees require removal, then a greater survey effort may be required. Similarly, should the initial survey indicate the use of the site by rarer species such as barbastelle and/or Bechstien then additional surveys may also be required.
- 4.25 As bats are likely to use the site, a sensitive lighting scheme is recommended in order to limit the impact of the development upon their feeding and commuting habitats. All bat species are nocturnal, resting in dark conditions in the day and emerging at night to feed. Bats are known to be affected by light levels, which can affect both their roosting and foraging behaviour. This needs to be taken into account with a sympathetic lighting scheme. Recommendations include:
 - Installing lighting only if there is a significant need;

- Using low-pressure sodium lamps or high-pressure sodium instead of mercury or metal halide lamps where glass glazing is preferred due to its UV filtration characteristics;
- Directing light to where it is needed and avoiding light spillage;
- Using baffled lighting where light is directed towards the ground;
- Avoid putting lighting near treelines or hedgerows and angling light away from these linear features which are used by commuting and foraging bats;
- Planting a barrier or using man-made features required within the scheme to form a barrier.
- 4.26 To enhance the local bat population and provide roosting opportunities, it is recommended that boxes should be hung on mature trees or buildings around the site. Recommended boxes include:
 - Schwegler 2F Bat Box These boxes are attractive to small bats such as pipistrelles and long-eared bats and can be hung on trees (Figure 4).
 - Schwegler 2FN Bat Box This is slightly larger than the 2F and provides opportunities for the larger bats such as noctules. These should be hung on mature trees.
 - Schwegler 1FD Bat Box This box has been designed specifically for smaller bats and provides opportunities as a maternity roost (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Schwegler 2F (left) and 1FD (right) bat boxes

Dormice

4.27 Evidence of dormice was identified on-site along with highly suitable scrub and treelines with a dense understory and high diversity of species of value to dormice. From the records obtained from SBRC there are also records of dormice in the local area. It is therefore assumed dormice are present on-site, further surveys are recommended to determine which areas of the site are in use by dormice. This survey will be in support of an application for a Natural England license required to undertake tree and scrub removal.

4.28 Dormice surveys should be performed over a number of months. Each month of the year is given a score of suitability. A survey effort adding up to a score of 20 will be required over the course of year in order to achieve suitable survey effort.

Great Crested Newts

- 4.29 While there were no ponds on site, two ponds were identified within a 250m radius of the site, both of which were situated on private land and inaccessible to survey. Records obtained from SBRC indicate the presence of GCNs within a 2km radius.
- 4.30 Pond P1 was situated approximately 70m north, it was not possible to confirm the presence of this pond, analysis of satellite imagery over the past 10 years suggests the pond may no longer exist. Furthermore, given its isolated position within an arable field, a terrestrial habitat considered generally unsuitable for GCNs, it is considered unlikely that GCNs would be present within pond P1. Therefore, the site is not considered to be constrained by GCNs dispersing from pond P1.
- 4.31 Pond P2 was situated approximately 100n to the east, it was not possible to confirm the presence of this pond. This pond featured some connectivity to the site through the adjacent hedgerows. The possibility of GCNs dispersing onto the site from this pond should not be discounted entirely. When subject to Natural England's rapid risk assessment tool, there is a risk of offence (See table 3 below).

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.4
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.4
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

Table	3:	Natural	England	Ranid	Risk	assessment	of Pond	P2.
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"Amber: offence likely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that an offence is likely. In this case, the best option is to redesign the development (location, layout, methods, duration or timing; see Non-licensed avoidance measures tool) so that the effects are minimised. You can do this and then rerun the risk assessment to test whether the result changes, or preferably run your own detailed site-specific assessment. Bear in mind that this generic risk assessment will over- or under-estimate some risks because it cannot take into account site-specific details, as mentioned in caveats above. In particular, the exact location of the development in relation to resting places, dispersal areas and barriers should be critically examined. Once you have amended the scheme you will need to decide if a licence is required; this should be done if on balance you believe an offence is reasonably likely.

- 4.32 It must be noted the licensed risk assessment is a generic assessment and does not consider the nature of the habitats present and the wider landscape. In terms of this site, the terrestrial habitat on site provides some good dispersal opportunities, particularly the bounding treelines and scrub. While the grassland was tall, it appears to be managed with an annual cut and as a result has not developed a dense tussocky sward favoured by GCNs. It is therefore considered that any GCNs using the site would be most likely using the boundary features and that provided these areas are retained there will be no significant loss of optimal terrestrial GCN habitat.
- 4.33 Research on GCNs terrestrial habitat (Cresswell et al in the UK 'An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt Triturus cristatus English Nature Research Reports 576 and Spatial patterns of migrating GCNs and smooth newts: the importance of the terrestrial habitat surrounding the breeding pond') has identified a higher affinity of GCNs using areas which are wooded, rather than grassland. Woodland habitats present varied structural habitat and provide both shelter and humid microclimates to a much greater extent than grassland. Newts use old woodland stump and piles of old leaves as damp refuge but also taking advantage of the

heat produced from decomposing plant materials. These habitats are not found on the grassland habitats where grazing has been prevalent as is the case here on the land most likely to be lost under the proposals, although leaf litter piles were identified in scattered locations across the allotments.

- 4.34 Furthermore, research by Robert Jehle (2000) identified a 'terrestrial zone' of 63 metres around a breeding pond, within which 95% of summer refuges were located. A subsequent study (Jehle, R. & Arntzen, JW., 2000) showed that after the breeding season 64% of newts were recorded within 20m of the pond site.
- 4.35 Furthermore, given the location of the site on the edge of a developed area, the proposals would not isolate the pond from other local ponds, not does the development impact on known breeding sites, or isolate breeding sites from other breeding sites, or indeed breeding sites from foraging habitat or dispersal routes. As such it is considered that any development on the site, of which the majority is considered largely unfavourable for GCNs, would not impact upon the favourable conservation status of GCNs in the wider landscape.
- 4.36 Regardless, the potential of the proposals to impact on GCNs should not be discounted entirely and it is recommended a precautionary approach to GCNs should be undertaken. As such, sensitive clearance has been recommended and along with retention, enhancement of the margins of the site have also been recommended within this report.

Reasonable Avoidance Measures

- 4.37 It is recommended that the current management regime be maintained to limit suitability of the site for GCNs and prevent the grass from developing a dense tussocky sward. Much of the site is considered to be sub-optimal for amphibian's due to the nature of the grassland.
- 4.38 When removing shrubs or other small patches of vegetation where present, a sensitive approach to vegetation removal should be adopted, detailed below. Prior to any

clearance works commencing, consideration should be given to the status of reptiles onsite.

Vegetation removal works will follow the following specification:

- Vegetation removal works are to be carried out using hand tools only.
- Vegetation will be strimmed/cut down using the following method in suitable weather conditions (avoiding rain/wet conditions) under ecological supervision:
 - 1. Day 1: Strim/cut shrubs/trees etc to 200mm
 - Day 2: No works to vegetation to allow any great crested newts present to vacate the site
 - 3. Day 3: Strim/cut to ground level
 - Day 4: No works to vegetation to allow any remaining great crested newts present to vacate the site
 - 5. Day 5: End of sensitive clearance process
- 4.39 Prior to commencement of works, the location of the proposed development should be kept in a state that is unattractive to GCN and without potential refuge opportunities:
 - Grass should be regularly mown to keep to approximately 50mm
 - Area should be kept free from scrub and tall ruderal species
 - Area to be kept free of piles of debris such as log piles, leaf piles, brick heaps or loose soil.
- 4.40 During development work construction materials, as well as skips and pallets, should be stored on hardstanding where possible and furthermore, should be elevated off the ground. This so that no features are created that GCN could potentially use as refuge habitat.
- 4.41 Where trenches and holes are dug, these should not be left open overnight. GCN (and other amphibians, reptiles and small mammals) may get trapped in vertical-sided trenches. Therefore, where there is a risk of this occurring, the holes should be refilled or planks of wood should be placed so that any trapped animals may use these to escape.
- 4.42 It is considered that if these methods are used on site then it is considered that no individual GCN would be harmed by the proposals.

4.43 Given that GCNs are known to be present within the area of Horsted Keynes, it is recommended that some enhancements for GCNs are included within the scheme. Creation of log piles and brash piles under the hedgerows and trees for use as refugia by reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates should be undertaken. Log piles should be located in a variety of locations, such as damp places, with some situated in more sunny locations. These should be stacked, and can be further enhanced through the addition of leaf litter and planting of climbing species such as honeysuckle or clematis. Such refugia can attract reptiles, small mammals, and invertebrates.





Figure 5: Pictures above showing how log piles can be created within the edges of the site or in the retained habitats on site.

4.39 It is considered that these reasonable avoidance measures will ensure that no harm comes to individuals GCNs and that the favourable conservation status of GCNs in the local area are maintained. No further survey work is recommended.

Reptiles

4.44 The grassland was considered to provide some opportunities for reptiles, in particular the edges of the field around the scattered scrub. All common UK reptile species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to kill or injure individuals. As any proposals would be likely to result in the loss of the majority of the suitable habitat for reptiles, a further reptile survey is recommended to determine which reptile species are using the site as well as their population size.

4.45 Reptile surveys involve the placement of artificial refugia to encourage reptiles to bask under during suitable weather conditions. The refugia should be put in place within suitable habitat, in this case the field boundaries and parts of the allotment, at least two weeks prior to the survey commencing, followed by seven survey visits in suitable weather conditions during April/May or September.

Other species

- 4.46 Breeding birds are likely to use the trees and hedgerows on site. It is recommended that as many trees as possible be retained and the boundary features should be left in situ. Any tree or shrub removal which needs to be carried out should be done outside of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If active nests are identified, works in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest.
- 4.47 Nest boxes could be installed in order to provide new nesting opportunities for birds and to achieve ecological enhancements in line with policies set out by the local planning authority. These can be hung on the buildings or surrounding mature trees postdevelopment. Recommended boxes include:
 - Schwegler 1N Deep Nest Box gives added nest protection from predators;
 - Schwegler 1B Bird Box general purpose bird box, suitable for many species;
 - Schwegler Bird House This is suitable for all common garden birds and may be attached to a building or wall so is suitable for siting behind climbing plant.
- 4.48 A number of rabbit holes were identified across the site, rabbits are protected under the Mammal Protection Act 1996, this prevents causing harm or death through asphyxiation. It is therefore recommended these holes be excavated carefully by hand.

Site Enhancements

- 4.49 A number of enhancements can be made to the final development to help reduce potential ecological impacts and aid in compliance with local planning policy C5. It is important to utilise native species of local provenance in landscaping schemes to enhance the ecological value of a development.
- 4.50 The grassland was relatively species poor, with few wildflower species. Retained grassland and field margins can be planted with herbaceous plants and bulbs. These will attract bees, butterflies and other insects as well as providing ground cover for smaller animals. Seeds that are tolerant of semi-shade and are suitable for sowing beneath newly planted or established hedges should be used. The following species can include the mix:
 - Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
 - Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*)
 - Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
 - Common knapweed (*Centurea nigra*)
 - Wild basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*)
 - Hedge bedstraw (*Galium album*)
 - Wood avens (*Geum urbanum*)
 - Oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
 - Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)
 - Cowslip (*Primula veris*)
 - Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*)
 - Red campion (*Silene dioica*)
 - Bladder campion (*Silene vulgaris*)
 - Hedge woundwort (*Stachus sylyatica*)
 - Upright hedge parsley (*Torilis japonica*)
 - Tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*)
- 4.51 Log and brush piles should be created under hedgerows to provide refugia and hibernacula for amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates. Log piles should be located in a variety of locations, such as damp places, with some situated in more

sunny locations. These should be stacked and perhaps some amounts of leaf litter added. Planting around log piles with such species as honeysuckle or clematis can also add value.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The site does not lie within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites. It is considered unlikely that the development will cause adverse effects to any nearby designations or the surrounding landscape given the lack of direct connectivity and distances involved.
- 5.2 The site lies 3.25km southwest of the Ashdown Forest SPA, it is at the discretion of Mid Sussex District Council as the competent authority as to whether a HRA is required. SANG and SAMM payments will also be required, the amount of which will depend on the number of units proposed for development.
- 5.3 The site does not lie within or adjacent to priority deciduous woodland or ancient seminatural woodland, it is therefore considered there will be no impacts on these habitat types as a result of the proposals.
- 5.4 The majority of the habitats on site are common and widespread throughout the local area and the UK as a whole. The most ecologically valuable habitats on site were considered to be the tree lines bounding the site, it is recommended these be retained under the proposals.
- 5.5 While no direct evidence of badgers was identified on-site, it is considered possible that badgers may forage within or commute across the on-site habitats. Some recommendations for sensitive work practices during the construction phase have been recommended.
- 5.6 Two mature oaks were identified as having potential to support roosting bats. It is understood these trees will be retained, should this change then further surveys may be

required for the northern oak. Soft felling is considered a suitable removal method for the oak along the southern field boundary.

- 5.7 The hedgerows were considered to provide good commuting and foraging opportunities for bats in the local area. Further transect surveys are recommended to determine how bats are using the site and what species are present.
- 5.8 Evidence of dormice was identified on-site, the tree lines bounding the site were also considered optimal habitat for dormice. Further dormice surveys are recommended.
- 5.9 Two ponds were identified within 250m of the site boundary. One of these ponds was situated within unsuitable habitat and therefore considered unlikely to contain GCNs. A further pond was identified Approximately 100m east, some reasonable avoidance measures have been recommended to prevent any impact upon GCNs that may be using the site.
- 5.10 The grassland and patches of scattered scrub were considered to provide good opportunities for reptiles. It is therefore recommended a further reptile survey is undertaken.
- 5.11 Nesting birds are likely to use the trees and shrubs on site. Any vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- 5.12 The site is not considered to be constrained by other protected species, such as otters and water voles. No further survey work for these species is required.
- 5.13 Recommendations for enhancements have been made within this report, aimed at improving the ecological value of the site and providing a net gain in biodiversity post-development.

6.0 References

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Wilson, G.J., Harris, S. & McLaren, G. (1997) *Changes in British badger population, 1988-*1997. People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.

Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.google.co.uk/maps

Magic Interactive Map: <u>www.magic.gov.uk</u>

Mid Sussex District Council: www.midsussex.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Map





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Semi-improved grassland



Scrub

Tree canopy

------ Hedgerow

HHHHH Fence line



Target note

Survey boundary

Site: Police Fields, Horsted Keynes Client: Strutt and Parker Surveyor: J. Bullard Survey Date: 07/07/2017 Drawing Title: Habitat Map



The Ecology Partnership Ltd Thorncroft Manor, Thorncroft Drive, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 8JB t: 01372 364 133 w: www.ecologypartnership.com **Appendix 2: Photos**











Photo 16. One of many rabbit holes identified across the site.



Appendix 3: Biodiversity Records



Ecological Data Search SxBRC/17/252 - Summary Report

An ecological data search was carried out for land at Police Fields, Horsted Keynes on behalf of Joe Bullard (The Ecology Partnership) on 11/07/2017.

The following datasets were consulted for this report:

		Requested	Radius/buffer size
Designated sites, habitats & ownersh	Yes	2km	
Protected, designated and invasive sp	pecies	Yes	2km
Summary of results			
Sites and habitats			
Statutory sites	1 SSSI / 1	1 AONB	
Non-statutory sites	1 LWS /	1 LGS	
Section 41 habitats 5 habita		ts	
Ancient and/or ghyll woodland	Present		
Protected and designated species			
International designations	26 speci	es	122 records
National designations	77 speci	es	880 records
Other designations	162 spec	cies	1,766 records
Total	173 spe	cies	1,823 records
Invasive non-native	26 speci	es	139 records

The report is compiled using data held by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) at the time of the request. SxBRC does not hold comprehensive species data for all areas. Even where data are held, a lack of records for a species in a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that the species does not occur there – the area may simply not have been surveyed.

This summary page may be published. The full report and maps may <u>not</u> be published or otherwise shared.

The data search report is valid until 11/07/2018 for the site named above.

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