

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Site: Land at 1 The Elms, Tallarn Green, Malpas

Ref: 21413

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SUMMARY

At land at 1 The Elms, Tallarn Green, Malpas, planning permission is being sought for the erection of a horse stable.

In July 2021, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

In view of the small scale of the proposed works (erection of a stable on improved grassland horse paddock), the likely low impact on protected species, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a background data search was not carried out in this case.

The Phase 1 visit took place on 23rd July 2021, in warm, bright conditions.

The site comprised a small, roughly rectangular shaped plot of land/horse paddock.

The plot was dominated by improved grassland, in use as a horse paddock.

Secondary habitats sections of perimeter hedges and fences.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

During the site visit just four species of birds were observed, of which House Sparrow *Passer domestica* is a Species of High Conservation Concern (RSPB Red list), whilst the rest were all Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green List).

Bird nesting opportunities within the survey area were limited to the perimeter hedgerows.

The proposed stable will not impact upon bird nesting habitat, however, as all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any hedge/tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the hedges/trees, shrubs or structures to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance. Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

None of the hedgerows contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation and were classified as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Furthermore, the site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, largely due to the limited extent of the plot and the relatively poor floristic diversity present.

There were no signs or evidence of Badger *Meles meles* activity, whilst there were no suitable habitats for riparian mammals.

There were no still water or other wetland features on the site, and as such there was negligible potential for amphibians.

The site offered poor habitat for common reptiles (i.e. grazed improved grassland) and along with the limited extent of the site, it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

Care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

Since the site was dominated by improved grassland, with limited floristic diversity, it was concluded that there was low potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

Finally, it is recommended the proposed stable provides biodiversity enhancement, achievable by erecting two Woodcrete Swallow cups within the stable and a Woodcrete Sparrow terrace nest box erected on the rear of the stable.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and survey objectives

At land at 1 The Elms, Tallarn Green, Malpas, planning permission is being sought for the erection of a horse stable.

In July 2021, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

In view of the small scale of the proposed works (erection of a stable on improved grassland horse paddock), the likely low impact on protected species, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a background data search was not carried out in this case.

1.2 Site description

The site encompassed a small, roughly rectangular shaped plot of land/horse paddock.

The plot was dominated by improved grassland, in use as a horse paddock, with the grassland comprising Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Creeping Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Meadow-grasses *Poa spp.*, amongst others. Forbs amongst the sward included Dandelion *Taraxacum section vulgare*, White Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Broadleaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolium*, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*.

Secondary habitats sections of perimeter hedges and fences.

The hedges included Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Garden Privet *Ligustrum ovaliflour*, and Leyland Cypress *X cupressocyparis leylandii*.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SJ 44831 44031 centred on the middle of the site.

1.3 Proposed works

It is understood that a horse stable will be erected on the plot.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk study

In view of the small scale of the proposed works (erection of a stable on improved grassland horse paddock), the likely low impact on protected species, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a background data search was not carried out in this case.

2.2 Habitat survey

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out across the whole of the survey site. It was conducted using standard JNCC (2003) techniques and methodologies.

The Phase 1 visit took place on 23rd July 2021, in mild, bright conditions.

2.3 Protected species survey

During the surveys the potential for other protected and important species was assessed. This included European Protected Species, legally protected species and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (and habitats).

2.4 Constraints

There were no constraints, as the survey was carried out at the optimum time of the year in good weather conditions.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

In view of the small scale of the proposed works (erection of a stable on improved grassland horse paddock), the likely low impact on protected species, and in line with current guidance on accessing and using biodiversity data (CIEEM, 2016), a background data search was not carried out in this case.

3.1.1 Designated sites

Statutory Sites

N/A

Non-Statutory Sites

N/A

3.1.2 Protected species

N/A

3.2 Habitat survey

3.2.1 Habitat descriptions

The following habitats were recorded across the site:

- ❑ Improved grassland;
- ❑ Intact hedge;
- ❑ Fence.

These are shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map in Appendix 1, with the target notes (where applicable) in Appendix 2.

Improved grassland

The grassland comprised a dense, rank sward of Perennial Ryegrass, Creeping Fescue, Yorkshire Fog and Meadow-grasses *Poa spp.*, amongst others, whilst forbs amongst the sward included Dandelion, White Clover, Broadleaved Dock, Daisy and Creeping Buttercup (Figs. 1 and 2).



Figs. 1 & 2 Improved grassland

Intact hedge

The hedges included Hawthorn, Elder, Garden Privet, and Leyland Cypress (Figs. 3 and 4).



Figs. 3 & 4 Intact hedges

Fence

Sections of wooden post and rail fence lined the perimeter of the paddock (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Fence

3.2.2 Flora

The botanical composition of each habitat was typical, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

No rare vascular plants were found.

3.3 Protected species survey

3.3.1 Bats

None of the trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation, whilst the greenhouse had negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Furthermore, the site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, largely due to the limited extent of the plot and the relatively poor floristic diversity present.

3.3.2 Badgers

There were no signs of Badger *Meles meles* activity.

3.3.3 Otters

No suitable habitat for Otter *Lutra lutra* was present within the survey area.

3.3.4 Water Voles

No suitable habitat for Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* was present within the survey area.

3.3.5 Birds

During the site visit just four species of birds were observed, of which House Sparrow is a Species of High Conservation Concern (RSPB Red list), whilst the rest were all Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green List).

Bird nesting opportunities within the survey area were limited to the perimeter hedgerows.

A full list of species observed is given in Appendix 3.

3.3.6 Reptiles

The site offered poor habitat for common reptiles and it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

3.3.7 Great Crested Newts

There were no still water or other wetland features on the site, and as such there was negligible potential for amphibians.

3.3.8 Invertebrates

Since the site was dominated by improved grassland it was concluded that there was low potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

3.3.9 Other species

No other protected or LBAP species were observed during the site visit.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Site evaluation

The site was considered to be of relatively low value to wildlife, this due to relatively small extent, and the current use as a horse paddock with limited floristic diversity.

However the perimeter hedgerows had potential to support nesting and foraging birds.

None of the trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation, whilst the greenhouse had negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Furthermore, the site was considered to offer very low value habitat for foraging bats, largely due to the limited extent of the plot and the relatively poor floristic diversity present.

There were no signs or evidence of Badger activity, whilst there were no suitable habitats for riparian mammals.

There were no still water or other wetland features on the site, and as such there was negligible potential for amphibians.

The site offered poor habitat for common reptiles and it is considered reptiles are likely to be absent.

There was negligible potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.2 Possible impacts of proposed work and recommendations

None of the perimeter hedgerows will be affected by the proposed works.

However, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of hedges to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance.

Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

Care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

Finally, it is recommended the proposed stable provides biodiversity enhancement, achievable by erecting two Woodcrete Swallow cups within the stable and a Woodcrete Sparrow terrace nest box erected on the rear of the stable.

4.3 Further surveys

No further surveys are required.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

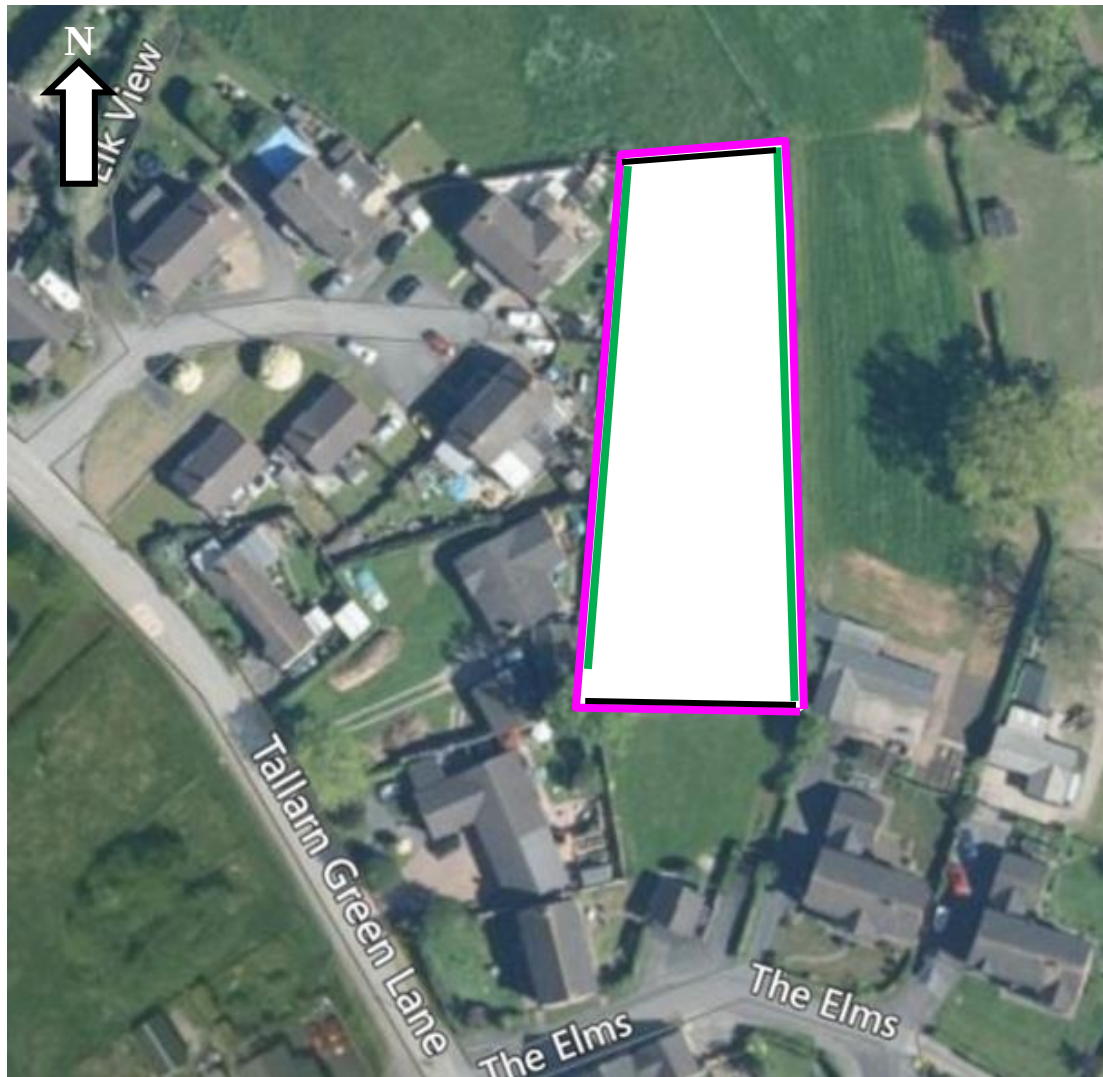
Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map

Appendix 2: Target Notes

Appendix 3: Bird species list

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map



(Not to scale)

Legend	
 Survey boundary	 Intact hedge
 Improved grassland	 Fence

Appendix 2: Target Notes

No Target Notes

Appendix 3: Bird species list

Common name	Latin name
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domestica</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

4.1 – Birds

In Britain, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. There are penalties for:

- ☐ *Killing, injuring or capturing them, or attempting any of these;*
- ☐ *Taking or damaging the nest whilst in use;*
- ☐ *Taking or destroying the eggs.*

4.2 – Bats

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- ☐ *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats;*
- ☐ *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);*
- ☐ *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;*
- ☐ *Damage or destroy roosts;*

- ❑ *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally;*
- ❑ *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats.*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.