7. Biodiversity

Appendix 7.1

UPDATED ECOLOGICAL WALKOVER

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Dear Ceara

Ecological Walkover Assessment – Fort Halstead, Kent

Introduction

In February 2020 CBRE commissioned Middlemarch Environmental Ltd to undertake an Ecological Walkover Assessment at Fort Halstead, Kent.

Middlemarch Environmental Ltd completed a suite of ecological surveys at the site in 2018 and 2019 to inform the Biodiversity Chapter of an Environmental Statement (ES), submitted in 2019. The ecological surveys are listed in Table 1.

Survey	Report Reference
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	RT-MME-127947-01 Rev A
Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	RT-MME-127947-02 Rev B
Nocturnal Emergence and Dawn Re-entry Bat Surveys	RT-MME-127947-03 Rev A
Bat Activity Surveys	RT-MME-127947-04 Rev A
Badger Survey	RT-MME-127947-05 Rev A
Breeding Bird Survey	RT-MME-127947-06 Rev A
Botanical Survey	RT-MME-127947-07 Rev A
Terrestrial Invertebrate Survey	RT-MME-127947-08 Rev A
Reptile Survey	RT-MME-127947-09 Rev A
Dormouse Survey	RT-MME-127947-10 Rev A
Winter Bird Survey	RT-MME-127947-11 Rev A

Table 1: Surveys Completed in 2018-2019 to Inform Biodiversity Chapter of ES

Middlemarch Environmental Ltd also produced a Framework Ecological Mitigation Strategy (FEMS, Report RT-MME-127947-12). It is now understood that the scheme is to be redesigned, and a revision to the submitted planning application made.

This updated assessment is required to determine if there have been any significant changes at the site since the initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Report RT-MME-127947-01 Rev A) was completed in May 2018, and to ensure that the ecological baseline data remains valid. The results will be used to inform updates to the FEMS.

The site under consideration comprises an irregular shaped parcel of land extending to 131.89 ha in size, located off Star Hill Road in Halstead, Kent. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 4970 5922.

Middlemarch Environmental Ltd has also been instructed to complete an Updated Badger Survey (Report RT-MME-151857-02) at the site and prepare an Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP, Report RT-MME-151857-03).

Methodology

An ecological walkover survey of the site was undertaken, during which the location and extent of all habitat types present within the site were noted. The presence, or likely presence, of protected species within the site was also noted.

Results

The ecological walkover survey was undertaken on 11th March 2020 by Jamie Fletcher (Senior Ecological Consultant).

The weather conditions at the time of the survey are detailed in Table 2.

Parameter	Conditions
Temperature (ºC)	12-13
Cloud (%)	40-50
Wind (Beaufort)	F1-2
Precipitation	Nil

Table 2: Weather Conditions

Constraints

A detailed Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Report RT-MME-127947-01 Rev A) in May 2018 and a targeted Botanical Survey (Report RT-MME-127947-07 Rev A) was completed over three site visits between May and July 2018. The aim of the updated walkover was to assess whether any notable or significant changes had occurred on site, and the time of year it was completed, March, is not considered to be a significant constraint to a robust site assessment.

Habitats

The habitats recorded within the site in March 2020 were found to be the same as those recorded in May 2018 and no significant changes had occurred. The results reported in the 2018 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Report RT-MME-127947-01 Rev A) are still deemed to be valid and provide an accurate baseline for the site.

The following habitats are present within the site (listed alphabetically, not in order of ecological importance):

- Amenity grassland;
- Bracken;
- Broad-leaved plantation woodland;
- Broad-leaved semi-natural woodland;
- Buildings;
- Coniferous plantation woodland;
- Fencing;
- Hardstanding;
- Mixed plantation woodland;
- Poor semi-improved grassland;
- Scattered scrub;
- Scattered trees;
- Semi-improved calcareous grassland;
- Semi-improved neutral grassland;
- Species-rich hedgerow with trees;
- Tall ruderal vegetation; and,
- Unimproved calcareous grassland.

The proposed development has been designed to fall predominantly within the existing built footprint. Reference to the 'Land Use and Green Infrastructure Plan' (Drawing 00556I_PP01 Rev P2) prepared by JTP illustrates that the most important habitats, including woodland (broad-leaved plantation, broad-leaved semi-natural, coniferous plantation, mixed plantation), grassland (semi-improved calcareous grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland and unimproved calcareous grassland) and species-rich hedgerow with trees will be retained. Many of these habitats will be enhanced for biodiversity. Pockets of bracken, scattered scrub and tall ruderal will also be retained.

Some scattered trees will need to be removed to accommodate the development, and some semi-improved grassland will be temporarily lost to enable cut-and-fill works, but replacement grassland will be created in these areas following completion of the works.

Fauna

Given that there have been no notable changes to the extent or condition of habitats within the site since the 2018 suite of survey work was completed, the site is considered highly likely to continue to support a similar assemblage of species / species groups, including:

- Roosting, foraging and commuting bats;
- Terrestrial mammals such as badger and hedgehog;
- Breeding and wintering birds;
- Populations of slow worm and common lizard; and
- Dormice.

A separate Updated Badger Survey (Report RT-MME-151857-02) has been completed.

Conclusion

The Ecological Walkover Assessment completed in March 2020 confirmed that there had been no significant changes on site since the previous survey work was completed in 2018-2019. The results obtained during the 2018-2019 surveys (see Table 1) are deemed to provide suitable baseline data to inform updates to the FEMS and support the revised planning application. The conclusions and recommendations detailed in the reports listed in Table 1 should continue to be taken into account.

With regards to badgers, the Updated Badger Survey (Report RT-MME-151857-02) supersedes the 2018 Badger Survey (Report RT-MME-127947-05 Rev A).

We trust that this assessment meets your requirements, however if you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,
For and On Behalf of Middlemarch Environmental Ltd.

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