



# **PHASE 1 HABITAT AND PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY**

of

**LAND BY  
HUNTINGDON ROAD  
THRAPSTON  
NORTHANTS**

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**Bat licence no.: 2015-13787-CLS-CLS  
Great crested newt licence no.: 2015 -18601-CLS-CLS**

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

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**Land by Huntingdon Road, Thrapston**  
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## **PHASE 1 HABITAT AND PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY**

### **Land by Huntingdon Road, Thrapston**

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The ERAs Consultancy was commissioned to survey an area of land beside Huntingdon Road on the eastern side of Thrapston. The original field was reduced in size when the A14 was built to replace the A604, and the A14 now forms the site's southern boundary.

#### **2.0 Site Description**

The site is in three sections. The western end houses a covered reservoir fenced off from a large area of compacted stone forming a hard standing. There is a concrete apron with the remains of a low brick wall at right angles to the boundary at the entrance to the site. This currently houses a mobile unit used for the local food bank. The eastern, triangular section, plus a narrow strip on the southern boundary of the hard standing, forms the former grass field. It has not been managed recently apart from the clearance of scrub. It is grazed by rabbits.

The site is located at Ordnance Survey grid reference: TL 010783.

#### **3.0 Survey Methods and Constraints**

- 3.1 The survey took place during the early afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The weather was showery with broken cloud and temperatures up to 25 degrees C during the day.
- 3.2 The field survey involved surveying the covered reservoir and field. Evidence of protected plants and animals were checked for and the habitats assessed. The habitat survey followed the methodology set out in JNCC guidelines (1990 (v.2007)).
- 3.3 The survey for the presence of animals with statutory protection followed best practice guidelines and involved looking for signs such as suitability of habitat, paths made, droppings and physical presence.
- 3.4 A desk-top survey involved checking data sources such as the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust and MAGIC websites for data relevant to the site.

#### **4.0 Statutory and Voluntary Wildlife Designations**

There are no statutory wildlife designations within or immediately adjacent to the study site under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended) or under International legislation, such as *The Habitats Directive*, embodied in *the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*. The survey site is c. 1km east of the Thrapston Station Quarry SSSI. The proposal has no implications for this site.

The UK's Biodiversity Action Plans list species and habitats of concern, which do not necessarily have Statutory Protection, but are regarded as requiring positive management to enhance populations or protect habitats. See Appendix 2 for the Northamptonshire BAP List.

## 5.0 Flora – Habitat Summary

The walk over survey of the site identified the habitats present. The following notes summarise the main habitat types. Plant identification follows Clapham, Tutin and Moore, 1987.

No WCA (1981) Schedule 8 plant species are known to occur.

### 5.1 Hedgerows and scrub

#### Hedges

The boundary to the south borders the line of the A14 and was fenced with ranch-style fencing and planted with a line of hawthorns at when that was built. An occasional dogwood has become seeded into the hedge by birds from shrubs in the opposite hedge. The northern boundary, beside Huntingdon Road, is in two sections. To the west of the site entrance, the delapidated remains of a 2m high, concrete post and netting fence has been subsumed by 5m high hawthorns, elder, elm, dog rose and bramble growing by a dry ditch. To the east of the entrance the fence is c. 1m high and that has been equally subsumed in hawthorn, ash, elm, bramble and dogwood with a stand of semi-mature elm on the road verge beside the boundary.

#### Scrub

The narrow, separate, section at the western end of the site, enclosing the reservoir, is locally dominated by hawthorn scrub mainly on its banks. There are scattered plants of hawthorn, elm, bramble and a buddleja on the compacted stone of the hard standing in the central section of the site. The eastern section, with the remains of the grassland, have areas of what has been dense bramble with young hawthorn and elm. A mound of cut material by the reservoir, shows where this scrub has been cleared to in the past few years.

### 5.2 Grassland

The grassland in the field is a relict, old pasture which has lost much of its diversity due to the dominance of bramble. Common agrimony is very common over all of the site but apart from the red fescue and common bent, the typical species of the grassland have been lost. The shallow soil on top of the concrete of the covered reservoir supports 10 ant hills and a grassland of red fescue and common bent with plentiful fairy flax, *Linum catharticum*, a species that is common in old basic grasslands. See plant lists in Appendix 1.

### 5.3 Wetland

There are no natural ponds on the survey site, immediately adjacent or within 500 metres.

#### 5.4 Ruderal habitat

The compacted stone at the western half of the site, with c. 50% plus bare ground, supports a ruderal community ie “Pertaining to living amongst rubbish or debris, or inhabiting disturbed sites.” See plant list. Many are annual or biennial species.

#### 5.5 Land adjacent to the survey site.

The site is bordered by the A14 on its southern boundary. To the north and west are industrial units. There is a two metre high fence between the site and the unit to the west.

### 6.0 Fauna

#### 6.1 Mammals

Surveys were targeted at those mammal species having statutory protection under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*; *Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*; *Badger Protection Act 1992*; those listed in the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan*; and in national and local Red Data lists. See Appendix 2 for the Northamptonshire list. The aim was to use survey techniques to identify the presence or likely occurrence of protected species.

##### 6.1.1 Bats

All species of bat and their roosts are protected under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5). Roost sites are protected at all times irrespective of whether bats are present. There are roost records for pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats for this 10 km square.

6.1.1.1 None of the trees in the hedge bordering Huntingdon Road have the rot holes, splits, loose bark etc. that could be used as a bat roost site.

6.1.1.2 The only structures on the site is a covered reservoir with soil on the top and sides and a low brick wall which performs no current function

##### 6.1.1.3 Emergence survey

No evidence of bats or bat roost potential was identified so no emergence survey is considered necessary in 2023. Local bats may feed over the site as it could form part of their feeding range.

The surveyor holds bat licence number: Bat licence no.: 2015-13787-CLS-CLS

### 6.1.3 Hedgehog

Hedgehog is on schedule 6 of the *W&C Act 1981* as a species that may not be killed, or taken by certain methods. It is also a UK BAP species due to the significant decline in numbers in recent years. Records for hedgehog exist for this area. During a development, care must be taken to avoid animals being trapped in trenches and should material, such as piles of wood or hedge cuttings be left for a period, these should be checked for animals sheltering under them or hibernating in the winter season, before piles are moved or burnt.

### 6.2 Amphibians

Natural England advises that all water bodies within 500m of a development site be checked for great crested newts. Great crested newts are protected under European legislation because of their scarcity there. However, despite the population declining here they are still widespread in England.

There are no great crested newt records for this or the adjacent 10km square. The valley of the River Nene has large wet gravel pits which have no potential for newts. No pond suitable for newts is known to occur within 500m. Great Crested Newts are not expected to occur on the site.

The surveyor holds Great crested newt licence no.: 2015 -18601–CLS-CLS

### 6.3 Reptiles

The commoner reptiles such as common lizard, slow-worm, grass-snake and adder are protected by law from being killed or injured. Grass snake are known to occur in the valley of the River Nene but the absence of ponds offering frogs, their main food makes their presence here unlikely.

### 6.4 Birds

The hedges bordering the site have potential as feeding, roosting and breeding site for birds. The area of bramble scrub on the western boundary, around the covered reservoir, could be used by species such as wren and white throat.

### 6.5 Other species

The site is well used by rabbits. There are 10 ant hills on the top of the covered reservoir.

## 7.0 Discussion

- 1 The survey site is approximately 1km from the Thrapston Station Quarry SSSI which lies to the west of the survey site. The proposals will not have an impact on the SSSI.
2. Birds are protected from being killed and from disturbance when in the process of nesting. Once nesting is complete, it is legal to remove the nest. The hedges on the northern and southern sides of the site should be checked for nesting activity before work is carried out on them if this is done within the bird-nesting season. March or

- end of August. These habitats are important and should be retained but the sides can be sided up or the hedge laid in the traditional fashion.
3. No potential was found for a bat roost, but bats in the locality could feed over the site. New lights around a development should have low-level or downward pointing lights around the buildings so as not to disturb their feeding pattern. See advice provided by the Institute of Lighting Professionals that can be downloaded from the website of the Bat Conservation Trust.
  4. [REDACTED]
  5. Hedgehogs could occur in the area. They are legally protected. They often use mounds of material as shelter or for hibernation.
  6. There no records for great crested newt in this or the adjacent 10km square, the latter mostly covers the valley of the River Nene. There are no suitable ponds close by and newts will not use the river or gravel pits. Newts are not expected to occur on the site.
  7. Grass snakes occur along the River Nene. However, they are unlikely to be found on the survey site, which is some distance from the river meadows and there are no ponds with frogs in the immediate vicinity.
  8. The survey did not identify any negative impact of the proposal on any protected species.
  9. Hemlock is abundant in the fenced off section at the western end. This species is very toxic and should be cleared with care as the juice could be absorbed through the skin.

## 8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Bats may feed in the area (usually pipistrelle in semi-urban locations). There should be no high-level lights around any new buildings as this will disturb their feeding pattern. See report by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.
- 8.2 Check for bird nesting activity before removing scrub around the covered reservoir or before trimming the hedgerows in the bird nesting season March to end of August. As there will be some loss of nesting habitat, the erection of bird boxes on the margins of the site would be beneficial.
- 8.3 Hedgehogs could occur in the area. Any mounds of material that could be used as shelter or for hibernation, should be moved with care. Any trenches that are dug, should have a ramp, branch or post propped in one corner when left overnight so that any animal trapped in a trench can escape.
- 8.4 Any strimming of the hemlock, *Conium maculatum*, at the eastern end of the site, should be done with care, as it is highly toxic and could be absorbed through the skin.

## 9.0 References

- Bat Conservation Trust 2007 *Bat Surveys. Good Practice Guidelines*  
Bat Conservation Trust 2008 *Bats and lighting in the UK*  
Clapham, A, Tutin, T & Moore, D (1987) *Flora of the British Isles*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. CUP  
JNCC guidelines 1993 (version 2007)  
HMSO 1981 *Wildlife and Countryside Act*  
HMSO 1992 *Protection of Badgers Act*

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HMSO 2010 *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations Act*

Institute of Lighting Professionals 2011 *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light*. (on BCT website)

Richardson, P 2000 *Distribution Atlas of Bats in Britain and Ireland*. BCT, London.

Magic website – Statutory wildlife sites and data



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**APPENDIX 1** - Plant species

A= abundant, D = dominant, F = frequent, L = local/locally, O = occasional, R = rare

**Grassland on top of covered reservoir**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent-grass	O-LF
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	D
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	O
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Fairy flax	F
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Common agrimony	O

**Flat area to the south of covered reservoir**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	LF-LD
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock	F-A
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	O-LD

**Banks of covered reservoir**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock	LD
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	O-LD

**Ruderal vegetation on compacted stone < 20% plant cover**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent-grass	O-LA
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Couch grass	L
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	O-LF
<i>Buddleia davidii</i>	Buddleja	R
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn seedlings	O
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose	O-LF
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	O-LD
<i>Ulmus</i>	Elm suckers	O-LF
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Common agrimony	O-LD
<i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i>	Yellow-wort	LF
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	LF
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	O
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Teasel	O-LA
<i>Epilobium ciliatum</i>	Canadian willowherb	O
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great hairy willowherb	O-LA
<i>Erigeron acer</i>	Blue fleabane	LF
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort	O
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black medick	O
<i>Picris echioides</i>	Bristly ox-tongue	A
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	LA

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<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping cinquefoil	O-LF
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort	O
<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort	O
<i>Senecio viscosus</i>	Sticky groundsel	O

**Grass field**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent-grass	O-LA
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Couch grass	L
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	O-LF
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	LA
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Common agrimony	O-LD
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	LF
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	O
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Herb bennet	O
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye daisy	O
<i>Picris echioides</i>	Bristly ox-tongue	O
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	O
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	O
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort	O

**Scrub in paddock**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	LD
<i>Ulmus sp</i>	Elm	O-LD

**Southern hedgerow along line of A14**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Cornus sanguineous</i>	Dogwood	O
<i>Crataegus monogya</i>	Hawthorn	D

**Northern hedgerow along line of Huntingdon Road west of entrance**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Crataegus monogya</i>	Hawthorn	LD
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	O-LD
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose	O
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	L
<i>Ulmus sp</i>	Elm	O

**Northern hedgerow along line of Huntingdon Road east of entrance**

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<i>Cornus sanguineous</i>	Dogwood	L
<i>Crataegus monogya</i>	Hawthorn	LA
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	L
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble	L
<i>Ulmus sp</i>	Elm	LD

**APPENDIX 2**

The Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan lists the following habitats and species as being important in the county.

<b>Habitat</b>	<b>Projects within habitats</b>
Woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland Lowland wood pasture and parkland Wet woodland
Dry grassland and Heath	Lowland dry acid grassland Lowland calcareous grassland Lowland heathland Lowland neutral grassland Quarries and gulleys
Farmland	Ancient/species rich hedgerows
Rivers and wetland	Flood plain grazing marsh Lowland fen Ponds Reedbed
Towns and villages	Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land Traditional orchards

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name</b>
Lichens	<i>Physia clementii</i>
Invertebrates	Black hairstreak Concolorous moth Lime bark beetle
Birds	Barn owl Grey partridge Nightingale
Mammals	Brown hare Common dormouse Harvest mouse Otter Pipistrelle bat Wolverine
Amphibians	Palmate newt
Crustaceans	White-clawed crayfish
Higher plants	Black poplar Plot's elm

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Aerial photograph of site – general view of location



Aerial photograph – detailed view of site





**Photo 1:** Edge of covered reservoir at western end of site



**Photo 2:** Dried vegetation on thin soil above concrete cover of reservoir plus anthills



**Photo 3:** Dense bramble on southern edge of reservoir



**Photo 4:** Northern and NW side of reservoir with dense bramble and hemlock



**Photo 5:** Looking east along site from top of reservoir. NB Mobile unit used for food bank



**Photo 6:** Southern boundary hedge and fence, put in when A14 built



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**Photo 7:** Wall and mobile unit looking west from field area



**Photo 8:** Looking east along length of field which forms a sharp point



**Photo 9:** Looking west from end of site



**Photo 10:** Northern boundary beside Huntingdon Road at eastern end with short fence



**Photo 11:** Mound of cleared scrub