

Land at Light Hall Farm, Solihull

Ecology Technical Note

C_EDP938_11_160616



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Technical Note has been prepared by the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) and has been commissioned by Taylor Wimpey UK Limited to inform the proposed allocation of an area of land known as 'Land at Light Hall Farm' (hereafter referred to as the 'Site') located to the west of Solihull, West Midlands. The Site is approximately centred at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SP SP122 757.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Technical Note is to provide a brief overview of the ecological conditions on the Site and identify any confirmed or potential 'in principle constraints' or other ecological constraints which would need to be considered in relation to the allocation of the Site.
- 1.3 EDP initially undertook a desk study and extended Phase 1 ecological appraisal of the Site during April 2009. This survey was updated during 2016.
- 1.4 The desk study undertaken in 2016 involved collating information from both statutory and non-statutory bodies, including Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC¹). Biodiversity information was requested for the following search areas (measured approximately from the centre of the Site at OSGR SP122 757):
- i. 5km radius for statutory designations;
 - ii. 6km radius for Annex II bat species records;
 - iii. 2km radius for sites of local importance; and
 - iv. 1km radius for other protected/notable species records.
- 1.5 The desk study confirmed that there are no statutorily designated nature conservation sites within the Site. However, there are five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 5 km of the Site. The closest of these sites are the River Blythe SSSI, Monks Path Meadow SSSI and Cowes Wood and New Fallings Coppice SSSI all located approximately 1 km from the Site at their closest points.
- 1.6 It is not considered that there are any ecological pathways (water courses/connecting habitat) connecting the Site to Monks Path Meadow SSSI and Cowes Wood and New Fallings Coppice SSSI and as such no direct impacts resulting from the development of

¹ MAGIC Partners. Interactive Map. [online] Available at: www.magic.gov.uk. Accessed 22 November 2013

the Site are considered likely. However, if these sites have open public access then the development may result in a potential increase in recreational pressures on these sites.

- 1.7 With regards to the River Blythe SSSI the water course/drain which flows south through the central western part of the Site joins the River Blythe approximately 0.5 km further down stream. As such there is a potential for the development of the Site to have an indirect impact on the River Blythe both during the construction and operational phase as a result of changes to water quality and flow.
- 1.8 There are a number of non-statutory sites, termed Ecosites, within 2km of the Site boundary. Most of these are not considered pertinent to the Site owing to their spatial arrangement and/or reasons for designation. However, four of these sites are present within the Site or are located in close proximity. These are summarised in **Table EDP 1.1** below.

Table EDP 1.1: Non-statutory Sites within or Adjacent to the Site

Site Name	Designation	Location in Relation to Site	Summary of Interest
Light Hall Pools	Ecosite (value unknown)	Four large ponds within the western half of the Site.	Four pools of low botanical diversity.
Dickens Heath Marsh	Ecosite and confirmed SINC	Adjacent to the western boundary of the Site	Semi-improved dry and marshy grassland plus small stands of wet woodlands
Cheswick Green Fields	Ecosite and potential SINC	Immediately south of the Site, to the south of Highleys Farm.	Semi-improved grassland and wet scrub.
Stratford upon Avon Canal	Ecosite and confirmed SINC	Immediately west of the Site to the west of Jerrings Hall Farm.	Linear habitat feature with species-rich aquatic and marginal flora.

- 1.9 Where possible these non-statutory sites will be retained and appropriate buffers provided to protect them during the construction and operational phase of the development. In addition, where possible, measures to enhance and increase connectivity to the surrounding areas will also be sought.
- 1.10 The habitats recorded during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey are shown on **Plan EDP 1**, with the survey confirming that the majority of the Site comprises arable and pasture fields which are demarcated by a number of hedgerows. These hedgerows on the whole are species poor, containing less than five woody species and poorly managed, containing gaps and being over grown such that they have become lines of trees or scrub. However, some of these hedgerows did support ground flora species indicative of more valuable hedgerows including bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), wood sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), dog's-mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*). To the east of the Site the hedgerow network on the whole

comprise hedges formed of mature oak (*Quercus robur*) trees with fragments of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedge interspersed between trees with the bases of the hedgerow grazed out by sheep and cattle. Despite the limited intrinsic ecological value of these hedgerows they do provide nesting and foraging habitat for birds as well as foraging habitat for bats. In addition, the mature trees within the hedgerows may potentially support roosting bats.

- 1.11 The arable fields present within the Site contain no discernible field margins and are of limited ecological value. The pasture fields on the whole support improved grassland dominated by perennial ryegrass although occasional fields have a greater species diversity supporting field wood rush (*Luzula campestris*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) although with perennial ryegrass still being the dominant species. These areas have been mapped as species-poor semi-improved grassland. None of the improved and poor semi-improved grassland are considered to be of ecological value.
- 1.12 At approximately the centre of the Site is a large area which comprises semi-improved grassland which supports rank grass species typically associated with unmanaged grassland including cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with stands of reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) also present. Within this area of grassland were also areas of more marshy grassland supporting angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and meadowsweet (*Fillipendula ulmaria*). This area of grassland as a whole potentially supports reptile species including grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) as well as providing habitat for ground nesting birds such as skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).
- 1.13 There are a number of ponds and ditches present across the Site ranging from fairly large permanent water bodies immediately south of Light Hall Farm to more ephemeral field ponds located within fields to the east of the Site. These ponds are all considered to have some potential to support breeding populations of Great Crested Newts (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) with the surrounding terrestrial habitat, in particular the area of semi-improved grassland described above, providing suitable terrestrial habitat.
- 1.14 During the update walkover survey a high level of badger activity was recorded widely dispersed across the western half of the Site. This included a well worn footpath and latrines. In addition, five badger setts were recorded although it was not clear which if any were being used as a main sett.

2. Recommendations for Further Survey Work

- 2.1 To inform any future detailed masterplanning and planning applications, the Site will need to be subject to further survey work (Phase 2 surveys). Based on the initial findings of the desk study and survey work undertaken to date it is recommended that the following Phase 2 surveys are undertaken:

- Great crested newt surveys on ponds on Site and within 500m;
- Reptile surveys within area of suitable habitat on Site;
- Breeding bird surveys;
- Bat activity surveys; and
- Update badger survey.

2.2 It is not considered that the presence of any protected species on Site would pose an 'in principle constraint'. However, they would need to be considered at the detailed masterplanning and planning applications stage in order for the development to comply with relevant legislation and planning policy.

3. Mitigation and Enhancements

3.1 Should any of the above surveys confirm the presence of a protected species then any forthcoming masterplan prepared to inform a planning application will need to provide inherent mitigation for any potential impacts. It is considered that as the Site is of a relatively large scale and presently supports habitats of limited intrinsic ecological value, comprising predominantly arable and pasture land, there is a significant opportunity as part of any masterplan for the Site to increase the biodiversity value and mitigate for any impacts on protected species. This includes, but is not limited to, the enhancement of the hedgerow network on Site, enhancement works to the stream which flows through the Site, improved management of any retained areas of grassland and/or creation of new areas of species rich grassland and the retention and enhancement of the non-statutory sites present within the Site.

3.2 It is also recommended that any masterplan seeks to create sufficient areas of public open space to mitigate for any potential increases in recreation pressures on Monks Path Meadow SSSI and Cowes Wood and New Fallings Coppice SSSI.

4. Conclusions in Respect of Ecology

4.1 The allocation and development of the Site at Light Hall Farm, Solihull is not directly constrained by any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations.

4.2 The ecological investigation completed to date has not identified any 'in principle' constraints on ecological grounds.

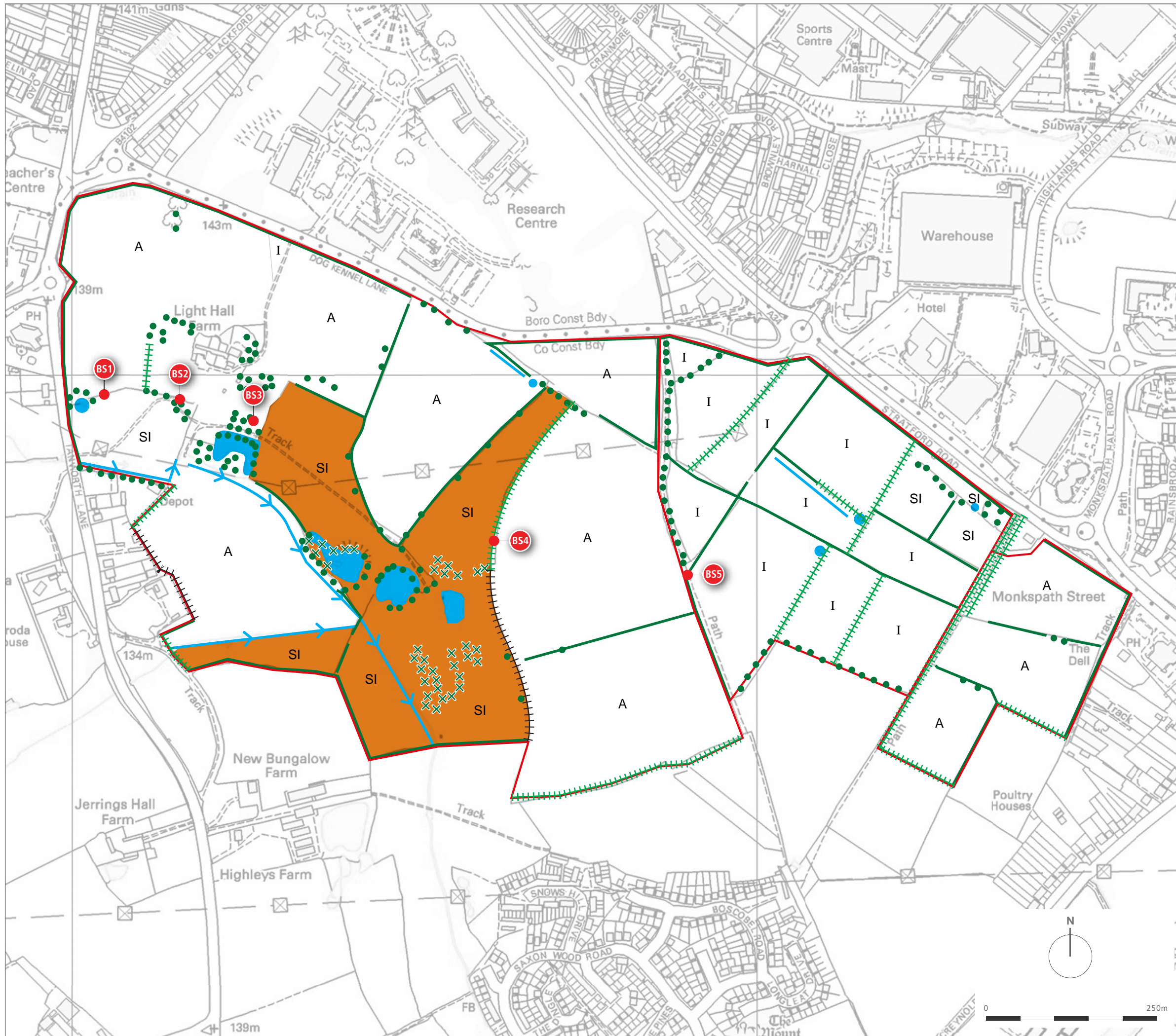
4.3 In order to comply with planning policy and legal requirements, a range of appropriately timed Phase 2 protected species surveys will be required in order to support any subsequent planning application for the Site. The results of which will be used to inform the final stages of masterplanning prior to the submission of any planning application.

- 4.4 Given the relatively low intrinsic value of the on-site habitats, coupled with the scope for habitat enhancement/diversification, EDP's overall conclusion is that the allocation and development of the Land at Light Hall Farm, Solihull offers the opportunity to deliver a net overall enhancement to the biodiversity of the area in the medium to long term. It will thus comply with all relevant policy and guidance at local and national level.



Plan

Plan EDP 1 Extended Phase 1 Plan
(EDP938/11a 30 June 2016 MC/JG/TB)



- Site Boundary
- ● Scattered Trees
- Intact Species-poor Hedgerow
- Intact Species-poor Hedgerow and Trees
- x x Scattered Scrub
- A Arable Grassland
- SI Semi-improved Neutral Grassland
- SI Poor Semi-improved Grassland
- I Improved Grassland
- Standing Water
- Running Water/Stream
- Fence
- BS1 ● Badger Sett and Number

edp

THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION PARTNERSHIP
Tithe Barn, Barnsley Park Estate, Barnsley, Cirencester,
Gloucestershire, GL7 5EG t 01285 740427 f 01285 740848
e info@edp-uk.co.uk www.edp-uk.co.uk

client
Taylor Wimpey UK Limited

project title
Land at Light Hall Farm, Solihull

drawing title
Extended Phase 1 Plan

date	30 JUNE 2016	drawn by	MC
drawing number	EDP938/11a	checked	JG
scale	Refer to scale bar	QA	TB



THE
ENVIRONMENTAL
DIMENSION
PARTNERSHIP

CIRENCESTER (Head Office)

Tithe Barn
Barnsley Park Estate
Barnsley, Cirencester
Gloucestershire GL7 5EG
t 01285 740427

CARDIFF

First Floor
The Bonded Warehouse
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff CF10 4HF
t 029 21671900

SHREWSBURY

The Stables
Sansaw Business Park
Hadnall, Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY4 4AS
t 01939 211190

e info@edp-uk.co.uk

www.edp-uk.co.uk

The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd Registered as a Limited Company in England and Wales, Company No. 09102431



**Landscape
Institute**
Registered practice



**worksafe
consultant**
www.smasld.com



as recognised by
SSIP
SAFETY
SCHEMES IN
PROCUREMENT

