

Land West of Rumbush Lane, Tidbury Green

Ecology Briefing Note

edp4466_r001b_150318

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Ecology Briefing Note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Rainier Developments Ltd. It sets out the findings of an ecological desk study and Extended Phase 1 survey undertaken in relation to potential development at land West of Rumbush Lane, Tidbury Green (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) SP 105 754, and is located in the south western corner of the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull.
- 1.2 A new housing development, directly adjacent to the site on the western side, is in the early stages of construction. Ecological baseline information collated in 2013 by Waterman Ltd¹, that was submitted in support of the outline planning application for this adjacent development (planning ref. PL/2013/01394/OLM), has been reviewed as part of EDP's ecological desk study.

2. Designated Sites

Statutory Designations

- 2.1 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside website (MAGIC²) was consulted for information on statutory designations within the site's potential zone of influence.
- 2.2 There are no internationally important designations (i.e. SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites) within 10km of the site and therefore it is considered that there are no constraints to development within the site in this respect.
- 2.3 There are five nationally important designations (SSSIs) within 5km of the site. The nearest of these (Clowes Wood & New Fallings Coppice SSSI) is approximately 900m to the south with the remainder being over 1km away. Owing to the separation distances of these SSSIs from the site, no significant adverse impacts would be anticipated as a result of development.

¹ Waterman, Energy, Environment & Design Limited: Ecological Appraisal (September 2013) and Protected Species Report (September 2013)

² magic.defra.gov.uk/

Non-Statutory Designations

- 2.4 Non-statutory designations in Warwickshire are named Ecosites, although sites with confirmed nature conservation value at a county-level are also named Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). Some Ecosites have been assessed and rejected as LWSs whilst others which have not been assessed are referred to as potential LWSs (pLWSs).
- 2.5 Information on nearby non-statutory designations has been obtained from Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC). This confirmed that, within a 1km search radius of the site, there are 15 Ecosites as summarised in **Table EDP 2.1**.

Table EDP 2.1: Non-statutory designations within 1km

Status	Name	Distance from Site at Nearest Point	Interest Feature(s)
Ecosite and part LWS (and part rejected as LWS)	Dickens Woods (Big Dickens Wood & Little Dickens Wood)	Partly within site boundary (area within site is rejected LWS)	Broadleaved woodland including some ancient-semi natural woodland (though not the portion within the site).
Ecosite (rejected as LWS)	Field West of Cleobury Farm	100m (SE)	Semi-improved grassland.
Ecosite and LWS	Dickens Heath Country Park	400m (E)	Semi-improved grassland, scrub, ponds and wetland.
Ecosite and LWS	Cleobury Farm Fields	500m (SE)	Semi-improved grassland and a roadside ditch.
Ecosite, part LWS and part pLWS	Land by Lowbrook Lane	560m (W)	Meadows along the River Cole – drier semi-improved grassland and marshy grassland.
Ecosite (rejected as LWS)	Fulford Heath	560m (SW)	Two woodland plantations and semi-improved grassland.
Ecosite (part rejected as LWS, part ungraded)	Field at Willow Tree Farm	650m (S)	Series of semi-improved fields, tall herb, hedges and trees/scrub.
Ecosite and pLWS	Old Quarries	660m (E)	Post-industrial site consisting of two water-filled and wooded quarries.
Ecosite, part LWS and part pLWS	Birchy Leasow Coppice	750m (N)	Unmanaged secondary woodland.
Ecosite (ungraded)	Earlswood Methodist Churchyard	750m (SW)	Species-rich grassland/woodland ground flora.
Ecosite and LWS	Dickens Heath Marsh	830m (E)	Semi-improved dry and unimproved damp grassland and small stands of wet woodland.
Ecosite and pLWS	Stratford-on-Avon Canal	850m (E)	Linear habitat feature that supports a good range of aquatic and marginal flora.



Status	Name	Distance from Site at Nearest Point	Interest Feature(s)
Ecosite, part LWS and part pLWS	Tythe Barn Lane Meadows	880m (N)	Semi-improved grassland, with some fishing pools and a small woodland.
Ecosite, LWS and part SSSI	Clowes Wood Complex (Little & Big Clowes Wood)	900m (S)	Lowland mixed oak woodland, three pools (former canal reservoirs) and willow carr.
Ecosite (ungraded)	Railway Cuttings nr Wythall & Earlswood	950m (W)	A flat, dry strip of tall herb and scrub.

- 2.6 The vast majority of the non-statutory designations listed above would not be at any risk of adverse impacts as a result of development within the site. The only exception is Dickens Wood Ecosite and part LWS. This designated woodland area measures c.10.7 hectares (ha), c.1.7ha of which is contained within the north of the site, and the remainder of which is directly adjacent to or in close proximity to the northern site boundary (see attached *Extended Phase 1 Survey plan*).
- 2.7 The portion of Dickens Wood Ecosite lying within the site was rejected as LWS and is of lower nature conservation importance than the woodland directly to the north, which is both LWS and ancient-semi natural woodland. The portion lying within the site is currently bordered by other non-designated woodland plantation to the south and south west, which is of similar value (as described below under **Habitats**).
- 2.8 The retention of a proportion of the woodland area within the site (albeit of lower importance) within a development layout would assist in buffering the more important woodland habitat off-site to the north, and provide the opportunity for its enhancement as part of the wider green infrastructure strategy for the site.

3. Habitats

- 3.1 Information on the habitats within the site has been obtained through the desk study described above, and through an Extended Phase 1 survey on 24 October 2017. The distribution of the habitats present is illustrated on the *Extended Phase 1 Survey plan* attached to this Note. In summary, the site comprises three open grass fields on the eastern side, together with three blocks of broadleaved plantation woodland in the north west of the site. All field boundaries are delineated by hedgerows/tree lines.
- 3.2 The three grass fields were found to be semi-improved, comprising common and widespread species and appear to be regularly cut as part of the annual management cycle. The grassland is damp in places, particularly at southern end of site, as evidenced by the prevalence of rushes. Poor semi-improved grassland is also present along the wayleave between the plantation woodland and to the west of the southern plantation

block. A detailed NVC-level botanical survey undertaken by Waterman in 2013, in relation to the adjacent housing development, also covered the fields within the site. This confirmed that the southern field contains semi-improved neutral grassland (NVC sub-community MG6b/MG5a) and the northern two fields contain species-poor semi-improved grassland (NVC sub-community MG6b). Overall, the grassland habitat is judged to be of site to local-level ecological importance.

- 3.3 The plantation woodland to the north west of the site is generally immature and has a poorly developed understorey and ground flora. In many places, the ground layer is dominated by coarse grasses and scrub. However, where old hedge lines have been subsumed by the woodland planting, there are lines of mature oak trees. Two woodland blocks to the north are separated from the third block to the south by a wayleave. The northern woodland blocks appear to be subject to some form of conservation management including the installation of bird boxes on some trees and creation of woodpiles at ground level. The most north-westerly woodland block is part of Dickens Wood Ecosite as described above. Nonetheless, the plantation woodland is currently of no greater than local-level ecological importance.
- 3.4 The hedgerows/tree lines are of variable structure and quality but are generally native species-rich and some contain a number of mature trees. The poorest hedge runs along Rumbush Lane on the eastern boundary of the southern field. Overall, the hedgerows are of local-level ecological importance.
- 3.5 A small linear area of broadleaved woodland is present beside Rumbush Lane on the eastern boundary of the central field. This is small but quite mature and is of local-level ecological importance. Another area of broadleaved woodland is present just off-site, adjacent to the southern boundary.
- 3.6 None of the habitats present would present a significant or 'in principle' constraint to development. However, to minimise harm to biodiversity in line with planning policy, the habitats of local-level importance should be retained wherever possible within the development layout. Where losses cannot be avoided, opportunities should be sought to recreate/replant new habitat or to restore/enhance the retained habitats.

4. Species

- 4.1 Information on potential protected/notable species within and around the site has been obtained through the desk study (WBRC records and Waterman Ecology Reports 2013) and the Extended Phase 1 survey described above. On this basis, the site has the potential to, or is likely to, support a number of protected/notable species as summarised in **Table EDP 4.1** below.



Table EDP 4.1: Summary of species potential

Species	Summary of Findings/Potential
Birds	Hedges, trees and woodland suitable for nesting birds (and several bird boxes have been put up in the planted woodland). Waterman's surveys in 2013, which included the site, recorded a 'modest' assemblage of breeding birds with no declining farmland species recorded. Highest numbers of breeding birds were recorded in woodland and tree belts.
Bats	Some mature trees have bat roosting potential, and the hedges and woodland are likely to be used by foraging bats. Waterman's surveys in 2013, which covered the adjacent land but did not include the site, recorded foraging by common and widespread species and identified several trees with low, moderate or high bat roost potential.
Badger	Some evidence of badger foraging was recorded in the site, but no setts were identified.
Great crested newt	No ponds are present on site, but the site contains potentially suitable terrestrial habitat. There are off-site ponds within 250m, mainly to the west, but in 2013 Waterman also identified a pond in the woodland strip adjacent to the site's southern boundary (see <i>Extended Phase 1 Survey</i> plan). Waterman's detailed surveys in 2013, which covered most of the relevant ponds but not the pond to the south of the site, did not record any great crested newts. It is therefore highly unlikely that species is present within the site, but additional/update survey is required to provide greater confidence in this assumption.
Reptiles	Rough grass and scrubby/bracken areas associated with the hedgerows and woodland edges around the site are potentially suitable for reptiles. Additional potential habitats include woodpiles in the woodland, and a rubble/spoil pile in the north eastern corner of the site. Waterman's surveys in 2013, which covered the adjacent land but did not include the site, did not record any reptiles. The presence of reptiles within the site cannot be ruled out at this stage.

4.2 Where the 2013 Waterman ecology surveys did not cover the site, or where this information is considered out of date, further detailed (Phase 2) surveys would likely be required to determine the presence/absence, abundance and distribution of the species described above. However, it is likely that any populations of protected and/or priority species recorded during surveys could be accommodated within a sensitive development layout with associated green infrastructure. Some species populations are likely to benefit from the design and long-term management of informal green spaces.









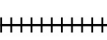



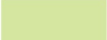

5. Conclusions

5.1 Any planning application for development within the site would need to be accompanied by a full set of updated baseline information, together with an assessment of potential impacts and strategies to avoid, mitigate or compensate for such impacts. However, at this stage it is clear that there are no 'in principle' or other significant development constraints in ecological terms. Furthermore, the relatively low ecological importance attributed to the vast majority of the site presents an opportunity to deliver net biodiversity benefits in accordance with national and local planning policies.



Plan

Extended Phase 1 Survey
(edp4466_d001b 15 March 2018 GY/TW)

-  Site Boundary
-  Broadleaved Woodland
-  Broad-leaved Plantation
-  Continuous Scrub
- SI** Poor Semi-improved Grassland
- I** Improved Grassland
-  Hardstanding
-  Intact Native Species-rich Hedgerow with Trees
-  Defunct Native Species-poor Hedgerow with Trees
-  Intact Species-poor Hedgerow
-  Fence Line
-  Scattered Scrub
-  Pond Identified by Waterman in 2013
-  Gate
-  Local Wildlife Site
-  Rejected Local Wildlife Site

