EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY & DAYTIME BAT SURVEY AT PRESTON NORTH END TRAINING GROUND, LEA, PRESTON, LANCASHIRE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2019 by PWA Planning to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of land at Preston North End Training Ground, Lea, Preston, Lancashire. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the development of a new indoor training facility and demolition of an existing building to make way for additional parking space. A daytime bat survey is required to search any structures and trees to be affected for evidence of bat activity.

Site Description

1.2 The site is located on Dodney Drive, Lea, Preston, Lancashire (O.S. grid reference: SD 49130 30484 – see Figure 1). The construction area comprises amenity grassland and bare ground. The wider site comprises further areas of amenity grassland, bare ground, tall, ruderal herb, continuous scrub, scattered trees and hedgerows. Savick Brook and a public bridleway run parallel to the northern border of the site with Ashton and Lea Golf Club on the opposite side of the brook. Residential housing is located to the east and south, with an arable field to the west.

Aims of Survey

1.3 The aims of the survey were to:

- Describe and map the habitats present on the site
- Assess the potential for protected species to be present on the site or just outside the immediate site boundary
- Identify where further survey may be necessary.

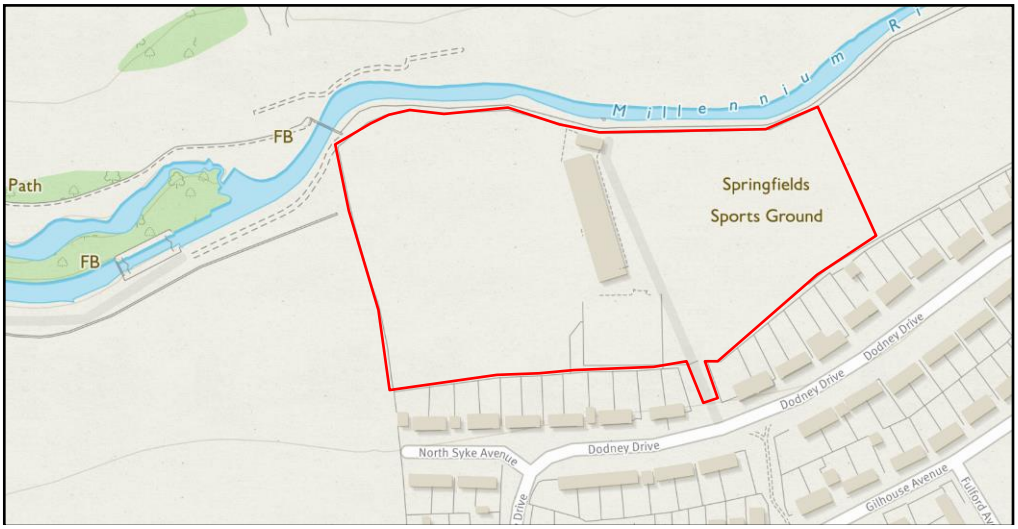


Figure 1 showing the site location within the redline boundary

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked, and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at locations of botanical interest. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2019. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.

2.2 During the Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt and assessing the potential for any buildings or mature trees to be used by bats.

2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

2.4 The daytime bat survey involved an external survey of the building, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges. The building was also searched internally for evidence of a bat roost, which included looking for the following signs:

- live or dead bats
- bat droppings
- bat entry/exit points
- bat urine staining
- grease marks on any timbers
- feeding remains such as insect wings
- areas clear of cobwebs.

2.5 A pair of close-focussing binoculars and a high-powered torch to search for evidence of bats externally and internally. In addition, the trees on site were assessed from the ground using binoculars and ladders to search for bat potential roost features, such as cavities or peeling bark.

2.6 Ben Crossthwaite (Ecologist) undertook the Phase 1 Habitat Survey on 16th August 2019. The daytime bat survey was carried out on the 7th October 2019. The weather on both survey dates was overcast, mild with showers. Ben is fully trained and experienced in habitat and protected species surveys. August is within the optimal time of year for protected species assessments and botanical assessments. Daytime bat surveys can be undertaken at any time of year. There were no constraints to the surveys and the site could be fully accessed.

3.0 RESULTS

HABITATS

3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats present are described below.

Amenity Grassland

3.2 The site supports intensively managed amenity grassland, which is used as football pitches. The sward height is kept to no more than 15mm across the pitches (see the front cover page and Photograph 1). The species-poor grassland is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*. The area of amenity grassland within the western half of the site is not as intensively managed, with a slightly taller sward.

Photograph 1 showing the amenity grassland

Hedgerows

3.3 Hedgerows occur intermittently along the southern boundary of the site (see Photograph 2). The hedgerows are intact and largely well-managed. The hedgerows are dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Rose *Rosa* sp. A large Leyland Cypress *Cupressus leylandii* windbreak/hedgerow is located towards the southern boundary of the site (see Photograph 3). This has been marked as a hedgerow on the Phase 1 Habitat Map.

Photograph 2 showing one of the hedgerows along the southern of the site

Photograph 3 showing the Leyland Cypress windbreak/hedgerow

Scattered Trees

3.4 Scattered trees are located along the southern and western boundaries of the site (see Photographs 4 and 5). Species include Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, Copper Beech *Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Poplar *Populus* sp., White Willow *Salix alba* and Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

Photograph 4 showing trees on site located along the southern boundary, adjacent to the access road

Photograph 5 showing the trees located along the western boundary of the site

Tall, Ruderal Herb

3.5 Tall, ruderal vegetation is present around the peripheries of the amenity grassland in the western half of the site, and around areas of continuous scrub and scattered trees (see Photograph 6). A large, established area is present in the north-western corner (see Photograph 7). Abundant species include Broad Leaved-dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus Sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Horsetail *Equisetum* sp. and Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*.

Photograph 6 showing an area of tall, ruderal herb

Photograph 7 showing the more substantial area of tall, ruderal herb

Continuous Scrub

3.6 Continuous scrub is located along the western part of the southern boundary (see Photograph 8). The origins of this habitat are likely to be an unmanaged hedgerow. Species present include Garden Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.

Photograph 8 showing a section of continuous scrub along the southern boundary

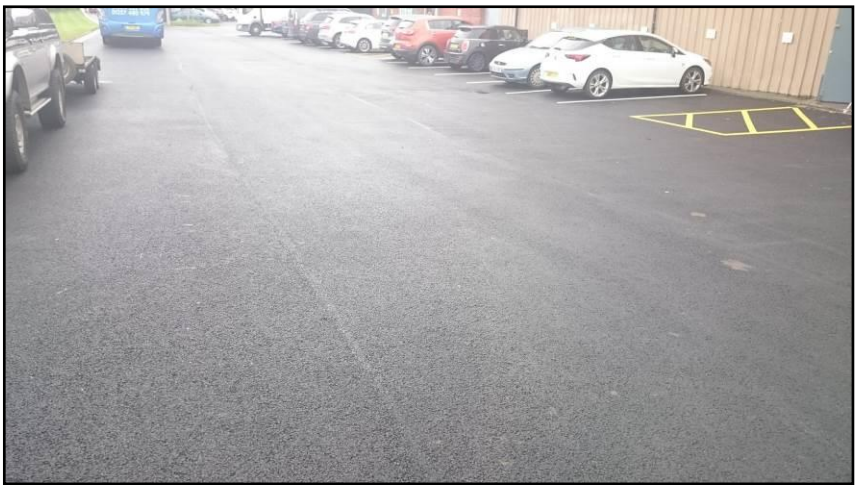
Ephemeral/Short Perennial

3.7 A small area of ephemeral/short perennial is located on the peripheries of a car park (see Photograph 9). Species include Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Wavy Bitter-cress *Cardamine flexuosa* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg.

Photograph 9 showing the area of ephemeral/short perennial

Bare Ground

3.8 This habitat is located within the central area of the site and includes the access road, car park and turning spaces, tracks and paths (see Photographs 10 and 11).



Photograph 10 showing one of the areas of bare ground

Photograph 11 showing a section of an access path/track on site

Buildings

3.9 A series of buildings are located on site. A shipping container used for storage is also present.

Spoil - Equipment

3.10 A few piles of grounds maintenance equipment are present on site (see Photograph 12). These are referred to as spoil on the Phase 1 Habitat Map.

Photograph 12 showing one of the areas of spoil

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

3.11 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act, for example, makes it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.

3.12 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity was located.

Bats

3.13 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006). It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost.

3.14 The building on site was the subject of a daytime bat survey. The results are detailed below. The building was fully accessible. There were no constraints to the survey.

External Survey

3.15 The building is single storey, brick-built with a flat roof (see Photograph 13). The building is currently in use as a changing facility and canteen. A double-height boiler room is also present on the north-eastern corner of the building (see Photograph 14).

Photograph 13 showing the building exterior

Photograph 14 showing the double-height boiler room

3.16 The external masonry is in good condition and well-sealed with mortar (see Photograph 15). The wood and uPVC window and door frames are in good condition and well-sealed to the surrounding masonry with no gaps or crevices present (see Photograph 16).

Photograph 15 showing the exterior of the building

Photograph 16 showing one of the uPVC windows

3.17 The roofs edges are lined with wood bargeboard and soffits. Despite some aesthetic degradation, the bargeboards and soffits are in reasonable condition, free from holes and cracks and are fitted flush to the surrounding masonry (see Photographs 17 and 18).

Photograph 17 showing a section of bargeboard and soffit

Photograph 18 showing a section of bargeboard

3.18 The roof of the building is flat and covered with roofing felt. The felt, though showing signs of past repairs, is complete, free from rips and tears bats may exploit (see Photographs 19 and 20).

Photograph 19 showing a section of the building's roof

Photograph 20 showing a section of the building's roof

3.19 The boiler towers roof has a slight slope and is covered with corrugated metal sheets. The sheets appear in good condition and well-sealed at the roof's edges. No evidence of bat activity was found externally.

Internal Survey

3.20 The internal spaces are well-finished rooms with no habitats associated with roosting bats present (see Photographs 21 and 22).

Photograph 21 showing one of the internal corridor spaces

Photograph 22 showing a section of the canteen area

3.21 No roof void spaces are present at the internal rooms are built up to the underside of the flat roof. However, a false ceiling is located in the canteen area. A narrow void space is located between the underside of the flat roof and the tiles of the false ceiling. The narrow space consists of lighting and associated wiring (see Photograph 23). The space is narrow, dusty and cobwebbed. The space appears well-sealed, with no daylight seen.

Photograph 23 showing the narrow void space between the false ceiling and the underside of the flat roof

3.22 The internal space of the double-height boiler room is open to the underside of the roof with no roof void spaces present (see Photograph 24). The room is very duct and cobwebbed. The room is well-sealed with no daylight seen. No evidence of bat activity found in any of the internal spaces of the building.

Photograph 24 showing the internal space of the boiler room

3.23 The proposals are not affecting any of the trees on site. Trees along the western boundary of the site were identified as having potential bat roost features (PRFs). Linear landscape features on the site, such as the hedgerows, continuous scrub and trees could be used for foraging and commuting by bats. Many of the trees across the site, particularly along the northern boundary, have bat boxes installed (see Photograph 25).

Photograph 25 showing one of the many bat boxes installed on an on-site tree

Great Crested Newt

3.24 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.25 No ponds exist on site. Two ponds are located on O.S. maps within 250 metres of the site boundary (see Figure 3). The ponds are on the opposite side of Savick Brook amongst the intensively managed amenity grassland of Ashton and Lea Golf Club. The amenity grassland is a hostile habitat for newt dispersal. Savick Brook is a relatively wide waterbody that is also considered a barrier to newt dispersal. Due to the lack of connectivity of the ponds to the proposed development site, the ponds are discounted.

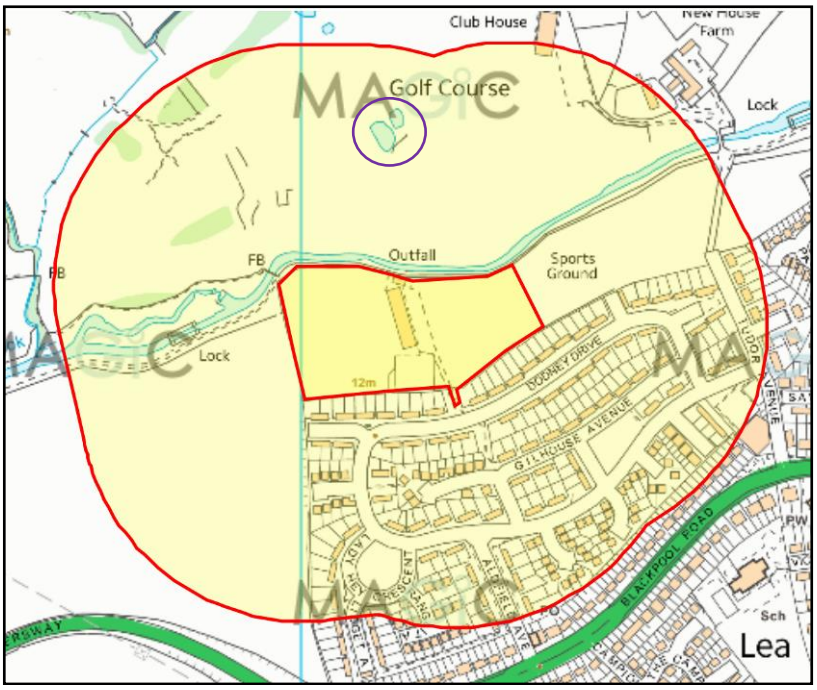


Figure 3 showing the site boundary, a 250 metres radius (red lines) and the pond locations (purple circle)

3.26 The site supports limited suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. The amenity grassland is intensively managed and mown frequently, offering little cover for amphibians and other wildlife. The hedgerows, continuous scrub and tall, ruderal herb offer potential hibernation and foraging habitat for Great Crested Newt.

Nesting Birds

3.27 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.28 The hedgerows, continuous scrub and trees on site provide suitable nesting habitat for birds. The grassland is sub-optimal for ground-nesting birds. The short sward, regular management, use as a football training facility and proximity to elevated perches for predatory birds (such as the trees, telegraph poles/lines and lamp posts) reduce the suitability for ground-nesting birds.

Brown Hare

3.29 Brown Hare is given priority status under the UK Biodiversity Plan. No evidence of Brown Hare, such as droppings, tracks or forms were found on site.

INVASIVE SPECIES

3.30 Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is present across the site, appearing to have spread from Savick Brook. This species is an invasive, non-native species, and is listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it illegal to allow this species to spread into the wild.

PROTECTED SITES

3.31 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites lie within the site boundary or immediately adjacent to the site. One statutory protected site is located within 2.5km of the site. This is Haslam Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is located approximately 1.8km north-east of the proposed development site.

3.32 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone which lists development types that may affect local designated sites. The type of development proposed is not listed within the criteria. The only mention of non-residential development relates to rural developments only.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

HABITATS

4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.

4.2 The proposed construction zone consists of bare ground and amenity grassland. The amenity grassland is intensively managed and is species-poor, offering little ecological value. The habitats in the wider site, include hedgerows, continuous scrub, tall, ruderal herb and trees, offer greater value for wildlife, providing cover from predation, foraging and nesting habitat for birds. None of the hedgerows satisfy the ecological criteria for 'Important Hedgerows' under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Development Context

4.3 The proposed development will cause the loss of amenity grassland and bare ground only. No specific habitat mitigation is considered to be necessary.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

4.4 No Badger sett or evidence of Badger activity was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. Badger is not considered to be a constraint on the development at this time.

Bats

4.5 The identified building on site has been the subject of a daytime bat survey. No evidence of bat active was found internally or externally. The building is in good condition and well-sealed. A narrow void space is located in the canteen area between the false ceiling and the underside of the roof. This was found to be cobwebbed and dusty with no favourable roosting habitat present. No evidence of bat activity was found. Due to this and the lack of evidence found, the building, including the attached boiler room, is considered to offer **negligible bat roost suitability**. Therefore the building can be demolished with no further bat survey work needed.

4.6 None of the trees on site are to be affected by the proposals. No evidence of bat activity was found during the survey. The trees on site were assessed from the ground for Potential Roosting Features (PRF's). Mature trees along the western boundary of the site were found to support PRFs but these are not proposed to be affected. Multiple bat boxes have been installed on trees across the site.

4.7 If any of the trees on site are to be affected by any future development, further survey work is needed to determine if bats are using the identified

PRFs on the trees and/or bat boxes, prior to works commencing. Bats use linear landscape features for commuting and foraging. Bats may use the hedgerows, continuous scrub and trees on site for foraging and commuting and this is to be retained. The boundary habitats, especially the mature trees with PRFs and/or bat boxes, should be protected with a sensitive lighting scheme. No further bat survey work is considered necessary at this time and bats are not considered to be a constraint on development.

Great Crested Newt

4.8 No ponds exist on site. Two ponds were located on O.S. maps within 250 metres of the site boundary. The ponds are discounted due to them lying on the opposite side of Savick Brook, which is a barrier to newt dispersal.

4.9 The amenity grassland on site is not suitable commuting or foraging habitat for Great Crested Newt. The hedgerows, continuous scrub and tall, ruderal vegetation offer cover for amphibians. However, given the lack of suitable breeding habitat in the locality and connectivity to extant ponds due to the water course, Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on the development.

Nesting Birds

4.10 The site supports suitable nesting habitats for birds within the hedgerows, continuous scrub and trees. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first. The intensively managed and heavily used amenity grassland is considered sub-optimal for ground nesting birds.

Brown Hare

4.11 The site supports unsuitable habitat for Brown Hare. The intensive management of the grassland reduces the suitability for Brown Hare. No evidence of Brown Hare activity was found on site. Brown Hare is not considered to be a constraint on the development.

INVASIVE SPECIES

4.12 Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is present across the site, including the proposed construction zone. This species is listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is recommended that this plant species be eradicated from the site using a recognised methodology. This may prove difficult due to the species spreading along Savick Brook but the plants on site could be the subject of herbicide application or be continuously pulled from the ground.

PROTECTED SITES

4.13 The nearest statutory protected site lies over 1.8km to the north-east of the site. Adequate buffer features such as railway lines, busy roads and urban sprawl lie between the proposed development site and Haslam Park LNR. Due to this and the small scale of the proposals, it is considered that there will be no detrimental impact on any statutory protected sites from the development.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Survey

5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** - If any work to the hedgerows, continuous scrub or trees needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season (generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required by experienced personnel immediately prior to work commencing.

- **Bats** – No further bat survey work is considered necessary at this time. However, if any of the trees on site with PRFs or bat boxes are proposed to be removed/managed, further survey work will be required prior to any clearance works commencing to determine the absence/likely absence of bats.

Invasive Species

5.2 It is recommended that the Himalayan Balsam be removed carefully using a recognised methodology.

Habitat Enhancement

5.3 It is recommended that the following measures are taken into account, if a landscaping plan is produced, to increase the biodiversity value of the site:

- Tree and shrub planting – where practical, native tree and shrub species should be planted.

- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

6.0 REFERENCES

JNCC. *Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*, JNCC, Updated 2010.

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PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP