

**Helen Scarborough
Old School House
Chapel Road
Tumby Woodside
Lincolnshire
PE22 7SP**

Mr Neil Dowlman
Neil Dowlman Architecture
14 Main Ridge West
Boston
Lincolnshire
PE21 6QQ

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Dear Neil,

Update survey of land off Old Main Road, Old Leake, Lincolnshire

Following our recent update survey of the above site on the 12th July 2021, I am writing to confirm the results of the survey and to provide advice in respect of protected species which may be affected by the proposed development. The survey was undertaken by Helen Scarborough and Sarah Vinters and is an update to a previous survey carried out on the site in October 2017.

The update survey assessed the site for its potential to support badgers, bats, water voles and nesting birds in order to be consistent with the 2017 survey.

Site description

The survey site comprises a single semi-improved grassland field bounded by dry ditches, hedgerows and trees, to the north of Old Main Road in the village of Old Leake, Lincolnshire - central grid reference TF410503.

The main site has not undergone any major changes since the initial survey in July 2017; A full description of the habitats and plant species on site can be found in the original report.

Semi-improved grass field

The field is currently grazed by sheep, and is dominated by perennial rye-grass and white clover, with cock's-foot, creeping thistle, spear thistle, cow parsley, common nettle, Yorkshire- fog, dock species,

creeping buttercup, hogweed, common mouse-ear, false oat-grass, common ragwort, prickly sow-thistle, yarrow, common field-speedwell, meadow buttercup, knotgrass, ground-ivy, common chickweed, greater plantain, daisy, pineappleweed, red dead-nettle, slender speedwell, soft brome, crested dog's tail, meadow barley, common bent, meadow foxtail, cow parsley, dandelion and groundsel. There is an area of silverweed in the gateway. Barbed-wire and electric fencing surrounds the field and there is a pile of dead wood within the field.

Site boundaries and surrounding habitats

The north-eastern boundary comprises the barbed-wire fence, a gappy hedgerow and a dry ditch. The hedgerow is dominated by hawthorn, with elder, sycamore, elm, dog-rose and bramble and the dry drain is dominated by common reed, with some water mint, dock, dense creeping thistle, cleavers, spear thistle and common nettle. There is a mature lime tree within the hedgerow.

The north-western boundary is made up of the barbed-wire fence, with a section of outgrown hedgerow and a dry ditch (which is walled in places). The hedgerow comprises elder, cherry species, blackthorn, hawthorn, ash and dog-rose, with bramble, ivy, pendulous sedge and common nettle beneath the hedgerow and within the dry ditch. There are three very mature ash trees along this boundary with bat potential, although they are not within the survey boundary, they do overhang the site and will require further surveys should they need to be removed or managed.

The southern boundary comprises an outgrown hedgerow with trees and a dry ditch. The hedgerow is dominated by hawthorn, with sycamore, elder, ash, English elm and dog-rose, and trees including ash, sycamore, elm, lime and crack willow. The dry ditch is dominated by ivy, with common nettle, common reed, cleavers, white dead-nettle, redshank, ground elder, ground ivy, hogweed, bramble and yellow iris.

Species noted within the verges (south boundary) of Old Main Road included perennial rye grass, false oatgrass, couch grass, cock's-foot, annual meadow grass, hogweed, dock and common nettle.

The surrounding landscape is dominated by arable fields, grass fields and the village of Old Leake. There is some connectivity offered by hedgerows and drains in the wider landscape.

The habitats and plant species recorded during the update survey are common and widespread. The ecological status of the site has not altered since the last survey was completed in 2017. The site does not meet the standard to qualify as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

Survey methods – bats

All mature trees were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. The trees were visually checked with the assistance of binoculars for the presence of features such as woodpecker holes, broken limbs, snag ends and rot holes.

Survey methods – badger

The site was searched for signs of use by badger *Meles meles* including setts, latrines, dung pits, pathways, hairs, footprints, snuffle holes and scratch marks on trees.

Survey methods – water vole

The boundary ditches on site were assessed for their potential to support water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and a search was made (where access allowed) for signs of use by water voles including feeding stations, burrows, latrine sites, runs through the vegetation and cropped grass around burrow entrances.

Survey methods – common species of bird

All habitats were assessed for their potential to support nesting birds. All bird species seen or heard were noted. All disused and active nests were recorded.

Survey results and recommendations - bats

The site is unchanged with regards to its potential for roosting, commuting and foraging bats.

The trees within the survey site are along the boundaries and either semi-mature or mature species. Three mature ash trees with potential roosting features for bats are located just beyond the north west boundary. Although these trees are not on the survey site, they do overhang it. If any work to manage or fell mature trees is to occur, then further survey work will be required. Removal or management of any mature trees will require a further assessment for bat roost potential prior to the works.

It is likely that bats will commute and forage over the site, as the grassland, hedgerows and trees all have good potential for use by commuting/foraging bats.

Local bats will likely be using the survey area for foraging and commuting, and a data search undertaken in 2017 shows multiple records for bat within 2km of the survey area, however, the development

of the site is unlikely to have a significant impact on the availability of foraging areas for bats within the local landscape. The following precautionary measures will ensure that there is no disturbance to foraging/commuting bats using the site during any development and once the change in land use is complete.

Precautionary measures for bats – Old Main Road, Old Leake

- All existing trees and hedgerows along the boundaries should be retained where possible and should remain unlit.
- To ensure bats can continue to forage and commute across the site, it is recommended that lighting on site is kept to a minimum. If it is absolutely necessary to include some external lighting, then these should be carefully designed to minimise disturbance to bats, by using down-lights rather than up-lights and using shields to limit light spill. Any external lighting (especially up-lights) used should emit minimal ultra-violet light, be narrow-spectrum (avoiding white and blue wavelengths) and should peak higher than 550nm. It should be remembered that artificial lighting disrupts and disturbs many animals, including birds and invertebrates, as well as bats.

Survey results and recommendations – badger

A mammal run and signs of foraging by badger were noted during the survey in 2017, however during the update survey no signs of badger were noted. No further work or mitigation is required. It is recommended that vigilance is maintained for signs of badger activity and a precautionary walkover is undertaken immediately ahead of work commencing. If badger presence is suspected at any time then it will be necessary to seek advice immediately by calling 07979 833524, to ensure legal compliance.

Survey results and recommendations – water vole

No signs of water vole were found during either survey. The ditches were all dry at the time of the survey and are considered to have very low potential to support water vole. No further work or mitigation is required for this species.

Survey results and recommendations – common species of bird

The following assemblage of common birds was recorded on the site and in the immediate environs of the site:

Table 1: Common bird species seen on site

English name	Scientific name	BAP/S41	BoCC
woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		Green
starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		Green
house sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Y	Red
great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		Green
blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		Green
magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		Green

The trees, hedgerows and grassland on the site all have high potential for use by nesting birds.

The site has high potential to be used for nesting by species of common bird. Any site preparation/clearance work should commence outside the active nesting season which typically runs from March through to late August. If work commences during the bird breeding season, a search for nests should be carried out before they begin, and active nests should be protected until the young fledge.

Enhancements and Biodiversity

The habitats and biodiversity enhancements recommended in the 2017 report remain relevant and are summarised below:

- The existing hedgerows and trees should be retained within the current plans. Any new hedgerows to be planted should use native species such as blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata*, wild cherry *Prunus avium* and bird cherry *Prunus padus*. All hedgerows should be appropriately managed with traditional techniques where possible to maximise their benefit for wildlife using hedge-laying rather than flailing or trimming. If trimming is necessary, ensure it is carried out every 2 to 3 years and in sections so that not all parts of the hedgerow are cut at the same time.
- In order to provide suitable habitats on site to encourage high invertebrate activity, any proposed amenity grassland/lawn areas within the development should be seeded with a flowering lawn mixture, such as Emorsgate Seeds EL1 mix (www.wildseed.co.uk), which is

resistant to regular mowing. Any areas of longer grass could be seeded with a general wildflower mix such as Emorsgate EM1 mix (basic all-purpose meadow mix). It is recommended that any wildflower areas are cut once a year, in late summer/early autumn and the arisings removed after 7 days to enable the wildflowers to flourish. Details of how to adequately prepare the ground prior to seeding, as well as ongoing management can be found on the Emorsgate website.

- As a positive conservation measure, at least four bat roost units should be installed on the site as part of the development, in order to maximise opportunities for bat species in the local area. Bat boxes should be placed on the northern and southern elevations of the new dwellings. Examples of bat roost units which could be used are given as an appendix in the original report. Avoid placing external lighting that illuminates the newly installed bat roost units.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of bird nest boxes of various designs within the development, which would also be a good conservation measure. Details of nest boxes suitable for use by a range of common bird species can be obtained from Wildcare, Eastgate House, Moreton Road, Longborough, Gloucestershire GL56 0QJ (01451 833181), www.wildcareshop.co.uk.

I hope this provides all the required information. If you have any queries or I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

Helen Scarborough

APPENDIX 1
Representative photographs of the site



Photograph 1: View across site



Photograph 2: North-west boundary hedge



Photograph 3: North-east boundary hedgerow



Photograph 4: South boundary hedgerow



Photograph 5: Wood pile on site



Photograph 6: Mature Ash with bat potential within the north west boundary



Photograph 7: Second mature ash within the north west boundary



Photograph 8: Northwest boundary dry ditch with wall



Photograph 9: Southern boundary dry ditch



Photograph 10: Sheep currently grazing the survey site