

## Appendix 5146/2

### Walnut Tree, Lichfield Down

**Site Name:** Walnut Tree, Lichfield Down

**Grid Reference:** SP 89869 36620

**Location Plan:**



#### Ecological Features/Constraints

##### Designated Sites

**Statutory Designations.** The site itself is not subject to any statutory ecological designations and there are no international ecological designations within 15km of the site. The closest statutory designation is Wavendon Heath Ponds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located approximately 4.1km south-east of the site. The site does not lie within any relevant SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ).

**Non-Statutory Designations.** The site itself is not subject to any non-statutory ecological designations. The nearest non-statutory designation is Walton Lake Local Wildlife Site (LWS) located approximately 1.6km to the west of the site. The LWS is designated for its ancient woodland habitats. A number of Biological Notification Sites (BNS) are also located within the 2km search area, the closest of which is a pond at Kent's Hill Spinney located approximately 1km to the north of the site.

**Ancient Woodland, Ancient, Veteran or Notable Trees.** There is no ancient woodland or notable trees present within or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest veteran tree is a Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* located approximately 450m to the north-east of the site.

## Habitats

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no specific historical records of protected, rare or notable plants from within the site boundary. The closest record of a notable plant species was for Fringed Water Lily *Nymphoides peltata* recorded approximately 600m south of the site.

**Habitat descriptions.** The site comprises a single tall grassland field with areas of dense scrub to the south and west. The site is bound to the north and east by existing car parking associated with a local school and health centre and to the south by residential properties. An area of dense scrub forms the western boundary and encroaches into the south-west corner of the site, this further extends offsite and beyond this lies an amenity grass verge and introduced shrub planting associated with Lichfield Down road.

### Tall Grassland

The site is dominated by tall grassland which, at the time of survey, had mostly set seed and died back from the previous year forming a dense mat of dead plant material over uneven ground. The grassland was dominated by Cock'sfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* with occasional Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobea*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Field Speedwell *Veronica persica* and Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*.

### Scrub and Trees

Dense scrub and scattered trees form the western boundary of the site which encroaches into the grassland in the south-west corner. Species present include Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with occasional semi-mature Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Corsican Pine *Pinus nigra* trees. Along the southern boundary a tarmac footpath is present alongside a line of scattered Blackthorn, Bramble and Dog Rose *Rosa canina* scrub.

## Species

### Badger

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no records of Badger within or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest record was located approximately 950m to the north-east of the site.

**Survey results.** The habitats within the site are suitable for foraging Badger but the site is located adjacent to areas of high human disturbance including a health centre and a school, and so is unlikely to be suitable for sett building. No evidence of Badger was recorded during the survey, and given the setting of the site and lack of nearby records are unlikely to be present in the vicinity.

### Bats

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no bat records within or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest record is of a Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* bat approximately 200m west of the site.

**Survey results.** No buildings are present on site. No trees with features likely to support roosting bats were recorded. The site is small in size and set in a suburban area, and it is therefore of limited value to bats, although it is possible that the scrub and trees along the western boundary may be used by common bat species (were they to be present in the area) as part of a wider foraging and commuting network.

#### Other Mammals

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no records of other mammals within or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest record returned was for a Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* located approximately 900m to the south-east of the site.

A single mammal path was recorded within the grassland, adjacent to the dense scrub on the western boundary of the site. Given the suburban setting of the site, this path is likely used by Fox *Vulpes vulpes*. No other evidence of mammal activity was recorded within the site.

#### Reptiles

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no records of reptiles within or adjacent to the site boundary. The closest record is of a Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* 1.6km west of the site.

**Survey results.** The tall grassland present within the site has some potential to provide habitat for reptiles, however the site is small in size and isolated from larger areas of potentially suitable habitat by amenity grassland and hardstanding. Therefore it is considered unlikely reptiles would have colonised the site.

#### Amphibians

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no records of Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* within or adjacent to the site boundary. There are several Great Crested Newt records within 2km of the site, predominantly to the north and west, with the closest approximately 550m to the west.

**Survey results.** There are no ponds present within the site or within 250m of the site boundary, and therefore Great Crested Newt (or other common amphibians) are considered unlikely to be present within the site.

#### Birds

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no specific historical records of protected bird species from within the site. The majority of records returned were associated with Caldecotte Lake to the south-west of the site. The nearest record of a Red Listed Bird of Conservation Concern (BoCC)<sup>5</sup> is a record of Skylark *Alauda arvensis* approximately 400m east of the site.

**Survey results.** During the extended Phase 1 survey a small number of common bird species were recorded within the site including House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* which is a Red Listed BoCC. The trees and scrub within the site are suitable for nesting birds and therefore

<sup>5</sup> Eaton MA, Aebischer NJ, Brown AF, Hearn RD, Lock L, Musgrove AJ, Noble DG, Stroud DA and Gregory RD (2015) 'Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man' British Birds 108, pp.708-746

mitigation will be required for any removal of suitable vegetation during the nesting season (see below).

### Invertebrates

**Background records.** The desktop study returned no specific historical records of notable invertebrate species from within or adjacent to the site. A small number of records of butterflies and moths were returned from the wider search area, the closest being a record of Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* butterfly located approximately 500m north of the site.

**Survey results.** No notable invertebrates were recorded within the site during the survey. The site is small in size and dominated by grassland with areas of scrub which are likely to support a limited diversity of invertebrates. Therefore it is considered unlikely that protected or notable invertebrate populations are present within the site.

### **Outline Mitigation Framework**

**Further Survey.** Based on the above appraisal, it is not considered any further ecological survey work would be required to inform future development of the site.

**Mitigation.** Based on the above appraisal, any future development of the site will require mitigation for nesting birds. All birds and their active nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Accordingly, in order to prevent damage or destruction of nests and avoid a potential offence, any clearance of suitable habitats will be undertaken outside of the breeding season (i.e. outside of March to August inclusive) or following a negative result of a nesting bird check undertaken by an Ecologist. These checking surveys should be carried out no more than three days in advance of vegetation clearance. Should any actively used nests be found, these should be cordoned off within a suitable buffer and protected until the nest is no longer active.

### **Opportunities for Enhancement**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages new developments to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity through incorporation of enhancement measures.

Future development of the site presents the opportunity to deliver ecological enhancements such as bird and bat boxes, native planting, planting of pollen and nectar rich flowers to benefit invertebrates, Hedgehog domes, and living infrastructure such as green roofs and walls.

**Photographs**

