

**Extended Phase I Survey
Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan
Land off Back Lane**

For:
Bere Regis Parish Council

December 2016

CONTROLLED COPY

01 OF 02

01 BERE REGIS PARISH COUNCIL
02 ABBAS ECOLOGY

This report is the responsibility of Abbas Ecology,
It should be noted, that whilst every effort is made to meet the client's brief,
no site investigation can ensure complete assessment
or prediction of the natural environment

14 Cowleaze
Martinstown
Dorset DT2 9TD

Tel: 01305 889855

Email : info@abbasecology.co.uk

Reference Number: AE/3666

Executive Summary

Survey date: 28/10/2016
Location: Land off Back Lane, Bere Regis
Grid Reference: SY 84461 95103

Species of Concern: Breeding Birds, Bats, Dormice
Habitats effected: Hedgerow

Further survey work would be required on site prior to development

The site is semi-improved and improved grassland. There are is some minor interest at the site. Slow worms maybe present in the semi-improved grassland and the semi-improved grassland and hedgerows maybe used by feeding bats and birds.

1. Scope

1.1 Survey

An extended phase 1 survey looks at the area to assess its likely value for protected species and other wildlife. It is not a specific survey for any one species and looks for general habitat types but it will identify the need for further survey work if required.

In Dorset on sites of >0.1 Ha, or where protected species are present, a Biodiversity Mitigation plan may have to be prepared and submitted with the planning application.

1.2 Site

The site is an agricultural field but close to housing, the A35 truck is near to the site.

The area around Bere Regis contains quite a lot of woodland interconnected with thick hedgerows.

1.3 Plan

This site is one of three sites surveyed around Bere Regis to scope for future housing needs.

2. Biological Records

Species records obtained from Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) were viewed to look for records around a 1km boundary from Bere Regis

The results of this search are as follows:

- There were several records of wading Birds at Bere Regis cress beds.
- There were records of Water Voles in suitable features around Bere Regis
- There were various records of Badgers around Bere Regis. Mostly from road casualties on the A35.
- There were no records for the Common Dormouse in the 1km area around Bere Regis.
- There were records of bat roosts within housing at Bere Regis for Serotine, Long-eared and Pipistrelle bats.

MAGIC (the Government's Geographical Information website) layers were looked at Bere Regis is close to the Dorset Heathlands SAC and SPA, the Black Heath SSSI is a part of this area. The site is in the fifth SSSI Impact Risk Zone, so unlikely to have any impact on the SAC/SPA/SSSI.

The position of the local 'Sites of Nature Conservation Interest' (SNCI) are shown in appendix 2 of this report. These are all deciduous woodland sites and includes one on the western edge of the village. The site surveyed is not on or next to any SNCIs or designated sites.

3. Methodology

The entire site was surveyed for protected species, and for the potential for protected species, all protected species surveyed followed guidance from Natural England's Standing Advice Sheets for the relevant species. Habitat features of interest were also noted. Species looked for included:

Bats: Any buildings due to be demolished or converted as part of this development were surveyed for bats and their potential for bats. Any trees due to be removed were also assessed, as was the surrounding habitat in terms of suitability as bat foraging areas.

Breeding birds: Any habitat features, for example, scrub and trees, which could potentially be used by nesting birds, were surveyed and any nesting activity within the buildings was noted.

Reptiles: Habitat features that could be suitable as hibernacula or feeding/resting areas were noted.

Badgers: Any area that could be used for feeding or could potentially contain a Badger sett was surveyed and any signs noted.

Otter and Water Vole: The river corridor was surveyed for signs of Water Vole and Otter activity and any areas with potential for use by these species was noted.

Dormouse: Any habitat features that could potentially provide feeding or nesting habitat for dormice were checked for signs of this species and areas with potential for use by dormice were noted.

Great Crested Newt: Any habitat features that could be used by this species was noted. This included both terrestrial and aquatic features.

Habitat: All areas of semi-natural habitat were also surveyed and any features of interest noted. Consideration was also given to the potential of this area to act as a wildlife corridor.

Legislation relating to these species can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

4. Results and Conclusions

The site showed had suitable habitat for:

Bats	✓	Badgers	✓
Breeding Birds	✓	Dormouse	✓
Otters and Water Voles	x	Great Crested Newts	x
Reptiles	✓	Habitat Features	✓

Therefore, these were assessed as below.

4.1 Bats

There were little places for bats to roost on the site, but there are records for them in near-by housing. The hedgerows on site may be used for commuting between roosts and foraging, the grassland is also suitable for foraging.

4.2 Breeding birds

All the hedgerows on site are suitable for breeding birds, as well as the few scattered trees in the centre of the site. However, careful mitigation including timings of works can address this problem if the site was developed.

4.3 Reptiles

The semi-improved coarse grassland fields are suitable for common reptiles such as Slow worms and Grass snakes. There is particularly good habitat in-between the scattered trees and corner of the site close to the housing such as shown in Photo 1.

4.4 Badgers

No signs of badgers could be found on site. However, it is possible that badgers use this site for commuting and foraging occasionally.

4.5 Dormice

The hedgerows on site are a little fragmented with gaps, making them less suitable for Dormice. There are no records for this species in or around the site.

4.6 Habitat Features

The area surveyed covered two fields. The western end, closer to Roke Road contained improved grassland dominated by Perennial rye-grass. However, the field that backed onto the gardens of the houses of Butt Lane contained a more varied grassland flora (shown in Photo 2). Most was semi-improved, dominated by the coarse grasses:

Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common Couch	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>
False Oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Yorkshire-fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

There were 'finer' patches within the sward particularly around an area of willow scrub in the centre of the field (shown in photo 3) and near the top corner near where Back Lane meets Butt Lane. In these patches the following was recorded:

Common Cat's ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Corn Mint	<i>Mentha arvensis</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>

Vetches	<i>Vicia sp.</i>
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>

There were also patches dominated by nettle and creeping thistle. This sort of habitat has value for invertebrates and common species such as short-tailed vole and slow worms. Therefore, it can be a good habitat for foraging bats and birds, including Barn Owls.

Brown hares have been known to use this sort of habitat and a latrine of theirs was found within the field as shown in Photo 4. Their droppings are larger than rabbits who also tend to latrine closer to hedgerow cover.

There are three patches of trees within the centre of the semi-improved grassland. These include garden species of Laurel and Globe buddleia as well as willow.

There are three hedgerows on the site. The hedgerow that runs parallel to the A35 at the end of Butt Lane is not a hedgerow but a gappy line of nettle and bramble.

The hedgerow that separates the two fields is quite gappy with a couple of conifer trees present (possibly Norway spruce) and contains an Ash tree (shown in Photo 5). Beyond the ash tree and beyond the survey site the hedgerow becomes thicker and more diverse. Species include:

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Blackthorn (dominant)	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Rose	<i>Rosa spp.</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>

There are gaps in the hedgerow which have been filled with bramble and ivy. It has good linkages to the wider countryside.

The hedgerow that runs along the Back Lane is very varied as shown in Photos 6 and 7. At the top of the site near Butt Lane it is a line of trees that links into a line of apple trees (shown in Photo 8). Further down it becomes denser with a shaded base that contains hound's tongue fern. However, there are gaps along its length compromising its ability to act as a wildlife corridor. It has value in its proximity to the hedgerow on the other side of Back Lane as Photo 7 shows this area will in its entirety be providing a valuable corridor for bats, birds and invertebrates, but it could be improved through further planting to make a denser woodland corridor.

Woody species recorded include:

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Rose	<i>Rosa spp.</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>



Photo 1: Long grass and debris between tree areas



Photo 2: Semi-improved, long grassland



Photo 3: Grassland becomes finer around the tree clumps



Photo 4: Brown Hare Latrine



Photo 5: Hedgerow separating the two fields, improved grassland in the second field.



Photo 6: Hedgerow along Green Lane



Photo 7: Hedgerow along Green Lane



Photo 8: A clump of Apple trees at the top of the hedgerow along Green Lane.

5. Constraints.

The timing of the survey meant that annually flowering plants would not be visible and prevented a full assessment of the botanical value of the habitat. However, the broad-habitat types that is required for a Phase 1 could be assessed.

6. Recommendations

The following area recommendations for further survey work that is likely to be required as a part of a planning application for development of the site:

- A reptile survey is required on the semi-improved grassland field situated behind the Housing along Butt's Lane. If reptiles are present a mitigation plan must be agreed to move/protect reptiles during construction.
- Although not protected by law the presence of Brown Hares must be considered in the Biodiversity Mitigation Plan as this is a species whose numbers have declined in recent decades. Consideration also needs to be given to loss of foraging habitat for bats and birds. Some of these habitat features could be replaced/retained in the landscaping of the site.

- Removal of any shrub or tree species on site must be undertaken between September to the end of February. This will ensure that no nesting birds are disturbed.
- A Biodiversity Mitigation Plan will be required to address issues such as enhancing the hedgerows, retaining the apple trees and addressing protected species issues on site.

Appendix 1

Legislation (summary)

Wildlife Protection legislation

Mammals:

Otters, dormice, water voles, and **all bat species** are fully protected under section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). According to this act it is an offence to:

Intentionally capture, kill or injure one of these animals

Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used by one of these animals for shelter or protection

Intentionally or recklessly disturb an animal whilst it is using this place
sell, offer for sale or advertise for one of these animals live or dead

Designated as European Protected Species' **otters, dormice** and **all bat species** receive additional protection from the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, under Schedule 2 which implements the EC Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom. In accordance with this act, it is an offence to:

Deliberately capture or kill a European Protected Species

Deliberately disturb a European Protected Species

Damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of a European Protected Species

The **greater and lesser horseshoe bats, barbastelle** and **bechstein's bats**, are also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. Areas which support populations of these species can therefore be considered for designation as a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Badgers receive protection from the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. According to this act, it is an offence to:

- to willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- to attempt to do so; or
- to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

Reptiles and Amphibians:

Slow worms, adders, grass snake, viviparous lizard, are protected against intentional killing, injuring or sale under section 9 (1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Great crested newt, natterjack toad, sand lizard and **smooth snake** are fully protected under section 9 (5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These species also receive additional protection as **European Protected Species** under schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which implements the EC Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom.

Birds:

Please Note: All breeding birds and their nests are protected under the general protection of Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as amended. This makes it an offence to disturb breeding birds.

Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system, Part IV Conservation of Species Protected by Law, (Circular 06/05).

The National Planning Framework (NPPF, 2012) recognizes the above as an active document. With regard to the Natural Environment, NPPF states:

"development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted" and "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged" (Para 118).

Also, the "presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined" (Para 119).

It encourages planning policies to "minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity by identify[ing] and map[ing] components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation" (Para 117).