

**Extended Phase I Survey
Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan
Land off North Street**

For:
Bere Regis Parish Council

December 2016

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01 OF 02

01 BERE REGIS PARISH COUNCIL
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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

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Executive Summary

Survey date: 28/10/2016
Location: Land off North Street, Bere Regis
Grid Reference: SY 85023 95080

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

Further survey work would be required on site prior to development

The site is improved grassland dominated by Perennial rye grass. However, it is bordered on three sides by thick hedgerows that have wildlife value for a range of species including breeding birds and possibly dormice and foraging bats.

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 road and a small business area at the top of North Street.

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 a few records of bat roosts within 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 as only one tree was present in the Southern part of the area. However, the hedgerows on site may be used for commuting between roosts and foraging.

4.2 Breeding birds

All the hedgerows on site are suitable for breeding birds, as well as the overgrown area in the southern corner of the site. However, careful mitigation including timings of works can address this problem if the site was developed.

4.3 Reptiles

The improved grassland of the main field did not have enough features to be valuable to common reptiles. However, it is possible that Slow Worms maybe present in low numbers if the grass is kept long.

4.4 Badgers

There were some signs of badgers foraging along the southern hedgerow on the site. No set holes could be found so it is likely that badgers use the edges of the hedgerows on site for commuting and feeding.

4.5 Dormice

The hedgerows on site do have potential for Dormice and their interconnectivity to woodlands in the wider countryside would increase this potential. There are no species records for Dormice in the locality. However, as the Dormouse is often under-recorded and the hedgerow provides good habitat for them it is possible that they are present.

4.6 Habitat Features

The grassland at the site was improved, dominated by Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), there was little other species present other than very common species associated with this habitat including creeping buttercup. The site is shown in Photo 1. The site had been left to grow long and over time its wildlife value my improve if it is kept uncut.

The hedgerows on three sides of the site were thick, especially the one that runs along North Street. This is shown in Photos 2 and 3.

The woody species recorded were:

Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Rose	<i>Rosa spp.</i>
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>

Climbers recorded were:

Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Wild clematis	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
White bryony	<i>Bryony dioica</i>

The number of woody species recorded suggest that the hedgerow is species-rich, it is also a good dense shape with good connectivity to other hedgerows and woodland. The base of the hedgerow

suggests that's that it has been enriched as although the plant content is more varied than the improved grassland in the field it contains species that can tolerate high nitrogen levels such as nettle and creeping thistle.

The other hedgerows covered short distances at the north and south of the site. The northern hedgerow is gappy at first with dense growths of wild clematis. It then becomes more like the hedgerow along North Road.

The southern hedgerow is more overgrown with a patch of wooded habitat behind. It has also been colonised by the non-native cotoneaster.

The surveyed area also includes a small over-grown area as shown in Photo 4. It was too dense to survey other than from North Street but did contain a large amount of wild clematis. The area is likely to be used by breeding/feeding birds and invertebrates.



Photo 1: The surveyed land along North Street



Photo 2: Hedgerow along North Street viewed from the field.



Photo 3: Hedgerow viewed from North Street.



Photo 4: The overgrown corner, shown from North Street.

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 grassland on the site is of low ecological value. However, the hedgerows do have value to wildlife. The effect of development on these features very much depends upon the layout of any new housing (how close to the hedgerow etc.) and how much of the hedgerow is removed (for access etc.).

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 full hedgerow survey will be required to completely assess its value under the Hedgerow Regulations, 1997. This survey should be carried out between May – October in order to see all the species in-leaf.

- If a large section of the hedgerow is being removed (more than 75m) then a dormouse survey must be undertaken. Smaller than this and mitigation with regard to this species and other wildlife can be addressed through mitigation.
- 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 protecting the hedgerows and 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).