

**Extended Phase I Survey  
Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan  
White Lovington**

For:  
Bere Regis Parish Council

December 2016

## **CONTROLLED COPY**

01 OF 02

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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: White Lovington, Bere Regis  
Grid Reference: SY 84614 94343

Species of Concern: Breeding Birds, Bats  
Habitats effected: Hedgerow fragments, Secondary woodland strip along the road, a few large trees.

### **No further survey work would be required on site prior to development**

The site is sheep-grazed improved grassland dominated by Perennial rye grass. It is adjacent to housing where the back of gardens is made up of a mixture of fencing and exotic hedges. On the boundary with Rye Hill Road Secondary woodland is present and there is a short section of hedgerow on the western boundary.

## **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 next to housing, Rye Hill Road runs along the eastern boundary.

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 fourth SSSI Impact Risk Zone, so any acid/heathland habitat within the survey must noted.

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 follows.

#### **4.1 Bats**

There were a couple of mature trees at the perimeter of the site in the linear woodland and at the boundary of one large garden. These were suitable for roosting bats but are likely to remain in any future development

Foraging bats are likely to be moving along the secondary woodland strip along Rye Hill Road and the hedgerows beyond the site.

#### **4.2 Breeding birds**

The secondary woodland, small area of hedgerow and trees at the boundary with people's gardens are suitable for breeding birds.

#### **4.3 Reptiles**

The grassland is sheep-grazed and is lacking features to make it a good reptile site. However, it is possible that a few slow worms are present in corners of the site and at the cutting pile shown in Photo 1.

The pile in Photo 1 does look new so may only be present at the time of survey. It is

#### **4.4 Badgers**

No signs of badgers could be found on site but it is possible that the odd one moves along the secondary woodland edge.

#### **4.5 Dormice**

The secondary woodland along Rye Hill Road does not offer as good a dormouse habitat as a thick species-rich hedge. It is possible that dormice are near-by (although there are no records for the species) in the hedgerows beyond the site but unless the proposal wishes to cut through the hedgerow on the western boundary dormice are not a concern on this site.

#### **4.6 Habitat Features**

The grassland at the site was improved, dominated by Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) with a few other common species that can tolerate improvements such as white clover and creeping thistle. The site was sheep grazed at the time of survey.

A line of secondary woodland has developed along Rye Hill road, as shown in Photo 2. This mostly contains an even-aged line of sub-mature Sycamore but there is a mature Ash tree in one corner. There will be some benefit to birds, invertebrates and commuting bats.

Most of the neighbouring gardens end in a fence or a beech planted hedgerow. However, one garden at the end of White Lovington cul-de-sac contained mature Oak, Field Maple and Sycamore as shown in Photo 3.

There are a couple of short sections of hedgerows on the western edge of the site. These links into other hedgerows in the wider agricultural landscape. They contain native species including a mature example of a sycamore. Its base indicates a historic laying of the hedge, as shown in Photo 4. These features appear to be just on the other side of the site boundary so will be retained but must be considered in the layout of any future development so they are not damaged during construction.



Photo 1: Vegetation heap on site, thought to be too new and isolated to be of any value to reptiles,



Photo 2: Secondary woodland along Rye Hill Road



Photo 3: Mature trees at the site boundary, at the edge of gardens



Photo 4: A mature example of a historic sycamore hedge lay, over the site boundary.

## 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. The secondary woodland on the edge of the site has some wildlife value for breeding birds and as a possible wildlife corridor for some species. The mature trees on site should be retained as a part of any future development and possibly protected during construction.

No further survey work would be required on site prior to development other than a possible check to assess whether the ecological potential on site remains the same. However, the following would be required to protect breeding birds and to recommend ecological enhancements on site:

- Any section of trees or scrub that is to be removed should be done so between September – end of February to avoid the bird breeding season.
- A Biodiversity Mitigation Plan (BMP) will need to be written prior to development to secure enhancements on site for Wildlife and to deal with the protection of the mature trees on site.

## Appendix 1

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### 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).