

**Proposed Development at  
Grange Farm  
Cannington  
Somerset**

**Extended Habitat Survey**

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**Report of Findings**

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## 1. Introduction

To ensure appropriate mitigation for Protected Wildlife Species and Habitats can be included in a planning application to develop an area of land for residential dwellings to the northeast of the A39 road at Grange Farm, Cannington, Somerset, a survey to search for protected habitats, protected wildlife species and indications of use by protected wildlife species was commissioned.

The proposed development site is roughly rectangular in shape and an improved agriculture field recently ploughed and planted with a rotational crop. Recent works have also been completed along the southeastern boundary to improve flood attenuation for the village of Cannington. This boundary is consequently marked by a post and stock wire fence dividing the field from the attenuation ditch and small stream. The northeastern boundary has a remnant natural hedgerow with tree line outside the boundary in the southeast half. The remainder of this boundary is a mix of hedges and fences separating the field from residential gardens. The northwestern boundary also has mature trees with a mix of remnant hedgerow and a variety of fences all separating the field from further residential properties. The southwestern boundary has planted hedgerow around a roundabout where the A39 joins the Cannington bypass.

With the exception of the southwestern hedgerow, the other hedgerows have many gaps and other areas where only Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) dominates. The other shrub species includes Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and occasional Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). The hedgerow base ground flora is dominated in places by Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), with Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*).

It is considered that the tree/hedgerow boundaries are not species-rich and are not parish boundaries such that they would be classified as important in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, but they can be expected to provide food and shelter for a variety of wildlife.

The land to the north is part of the village of Cannington with established residential properties, otherwise the surrounding land is intensively farmed in fields largely surrounded by connective hedgerows with some mature trees. There are no significant areas of woodland within 5 kilometres of the site.

The National Grid Reference for the centre of the development area is ST2620 3902.

The survey was completed on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and included a check over the whole area of the field and around the external boundaries where access was possible. The walkover survey assessed the habitats and looked for indications of use by protected species; it also assessed habitat features for suitability to support protected species.

The weather conditions were dry with a light intermittent south westerly breeze and 7/8 cloud cover. The air temperature was 14 degrees C.

This survey and report, without further surveys, is considered to be current for 24 months from the survey date.

## 2. Legislative Considerations

It is a requirement that the local planning authority protects and enhances the natural environment when determining planning applications as detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework. The authority also has to consider the requirements of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Although the site has been historically managed a number of protected species could be potentially expected to be using it, most of which would be included in legislation embodied in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, also potentially by European Directive implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (*Habitat Regulations*) and/or the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Further consideration to legislation resulted with the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Where such protected species are reported, the relevant legislation is relayed.

Reference to Government 'Magic Map' website confirmed that no protected sites of Nature Conservation Interest exist within 2 kilometres of the site. There is an area designated as Coastal Floodplain and Grazing Marsh within 200 metres to the northeast and a small area of young trees along the Cannington bypass which are listed on the Priority Habitats Inventory.

## 3. Bats

**All species of bat found in England are fully protected in law, as are their roost sites. The primary legislation is embodied in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, also by European Directive implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (*Habitat Regulations*). Further consideration resulted with the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.**

*Under the Habitats Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection. This is an absolute offence - in other words, intent or recklessness does not have to be proved. This is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not.*

### Desk Study

Reference to freely available internet data and local sources found records for the following bat species within 5 kilometres of the site. No site specific bat records were found.

Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), Brandt's (*Myotis brandti*), Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentoni*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), Greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and Lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideras*).

Country Contracts have recent records for the following bat species within 2 kilometres of the site.

- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Brown long-eared
- Serotine
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)

### **3.1. Extent and Method of Survey**

There are no structures or buildings within the impact of the development which could provide roosting sites for bats.

The mature trees within the site boundaries were assessed using binoculars from adjacent ground level for potential to provide roosting opportunities for bats. The assessment followed the guidelines in the Bat Conservation Trust 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists 2016'.

### **3.2. Survey Findings**

With the exception of an Oak (*Quercus robur*) tree adjacent to but outside the field boundary at the southeast corner, which was considered to provide 'Low' potential for bats, all the trees in the site boundaries were considered to offer negligible potential for bats to roost.

However, bats are known to be active in the near vicinity of the site and the field boundaries would provide commuting routes and foraging for bats.

### **3.3. Conclusions**

3.3.1. No bat roost sites or potential for roost sites were found in the survey area. The Oak tree identified as offering 'Low' potential is outside the field boundary.

3.3.2. Bats could be expected to use the boundary tree lines, flood attenuation area and hedgerows as commuting routes and foraging areas.

3.3.3. Consequently, any potential adverse impact on bats can be considered negligible providing the existing tree lines, flood attenuation area and hedgerows are otherwise retained and traditionally managed.

3.3.4. A lighting plan for the development will need to consider

### **3.4. Recommendations**

3.4.1. The tree lines, hedgerows and flood attenuation area must not be illuminated by construction or post development lighting. Safety lighting at the site access points must be designed and installed to minimise light spill outside access area.

3.4.4. To enhance the local provision for bat roost sites at least eight bat roost boxes or bat tubes/shelters must be installed within the development.

3.4.5. Planting associated with the development should predominately include native species which occur locally and chosen to provide food for insects on which bats feed.

## **4. Reptiles and Amphibians**

**Reptiles and Amphibians are generally protected by provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which protects them from willful or reckless injury or killing. Some reptiles and amphibians have additional protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.**

Desk Study - No pre-existing records for reptiles or amphibians at the site were found. Historic records for Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Adder (*Vipera berus*), Common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), Common toad (*Bufo bufo*), Palmate newt (*Triturus helveticus*), Smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*) and Common frog (*Rana temporaria*) were found within 5 kilometres of the site were found, but none of the records were nearer than 3 kilometres.

### **4.1. Extent and Method of Survey**

An assessment of the habitats within the site to consider suitability to support reptiles and amphibians was undertaken.

The flood attenuation area along the southeastern boundary was assessed for potential to support reptiles and amphibians.

### **4.2. Survey Findings**

4.2.1. The hedgerow bases were not found to have accumulations of debris which would provide refuge for reptiles.

4.2.2. The vegetation along the stream within the flood attenuation could be expected to provide refuge for reptiles and amphibians.

4.2.3. The interior of the field is intensively managed and considered not to offer potential terrestrial habitat for amphibians or reptiles.

### **4.3. Conclusions**

4.3.1. It is anticipated that existing hedgerows will be retained and the bases not disturbed. If however, a section of hedgerow is removed to allow site access reptiles/amphibians could be encountered.

4.3.2. The flood attenuation area is outside the development area and will be further protected by the inclusion of an attenuation swell within the development area.

### **4.4. Recommendations**

4.4.1. A Method Statement to minimise potential impact on amphibian and reptiles if removing section of hedgerow be produced to inform and manage such works.

## **5. Nesting Birds**

**Most resident nesting birds are protected by provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which protects the birds, nests, eggs and nestlings. There are certain exceptions which attract less protection and other rarer species which are afforded special protection.**

No pre-existing information on breeding birds within the survey area was known although a number of common species were observed during the survey.

### **5.1. Habitat Assessment**

The trees/shrubs and other vegetation in the site boundaries all provide nesting sites for a variety resident and passerine bird species.

### **5.2. Conclusions**

5.2.1. Nesting birds are a material consideration while nesting or whilst they have nest dependent young.

5.2.2. It is anticipated that the boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

5.3.1. If work to reduce trees, shrubs and vegetation is completed during the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) then development operatives must be carefully briefed that nesting birds are protected and must not be disturbed whilst nesting or whilst they have nest dependent young. Should an active nest be found work must be suspended and the nest left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.3.2. To compensate/enhance for the loss of potential nest sites at least 5 hole fronted bird nest boxes should be provided within the development.

## **6. Badgers (*Meles meles*)**

**Badgers and their homes (setts) are protected in legislation primarily by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Consequently, any interference or disturbance to badgers, or badger setts, as a result of development would require a licence issued by Natural England to allow such works to proceed.**

Badger setts within 0.5 of a kilometre are known to Country Contracts and badgers could be expected to be active around the site.

### **6.1. Extent and Method of Survey**

The survey area was systematically searched for badger setts and other signs of badger activity. The other signs of badger activity searched for were badger paths, badger latrines, badger footprints, badger hair and badger feeding signs.

## 6.2. Survey Findings

No badger setts were found within the site.

Well used animal paths, potentially used by badgers, were found along and crossing the northeastern and northwestern boundaries.

## 6.3. Conclusions

6.3.1. Badgers could be encountered during and post development. Appropriate briefing of contractors and information for site users must be provided and applied.

## 6.4. Recommendations.

6.4.1. All contractors on site must be appropriately briefed regarding badgers and setts, and the legal protection applicable to them.

6.4.2. Any construction excavations over 1 metre deep and left open overnight must be either cover plated or have a means of escape should a badger fall in. A suitable means of escape is a rough wood plank slowly inclined from the base of the excavation to the surrounding ground level.

6.4.3. Any openings within the construction/new buildings greater than 100mm diameter or equivalent, must not be left open overnight.

## 7. Otters (*Lutra lutra*) and Water Voles (*Arvicola terrestris*)

**Otters are fully protected in law, as are their resting places. The primary legislation is embodied in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, also by European Directive implemented by the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994. Further consideration resulted with the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.**

**Water Voles are protected by provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which protects their habitat and resting places, also it protects the animal from disturbance.**

Reference to freely available internet data and local sources did not find any records for the aquatic habitat at the site i.e. the flood attenuation area and small stream.

However, there is a record for Otter kilometre to the east and one record for Water Vole 3 kilometres to the north.

### 7.1. Extent and Method of Survey

An assessment and visual check of the banks and immediate terrestrial habitat along the section of the small stream within the flood attenuation area was undertaken.



This assessment carefully searched for signs of Otter including slides, footprints, spraints, couches and holts.

The banks were also searched for Water Voles and signs of activity including burrows, latrines, lawns and other feeding signs.

## **7.2. Survey Findings**

No indications of otters or water vole were found.

## **7.3. Conclusions**

No specific mitigation or compensation is necessary for these species as the area will not be impacted by the development.

## **8. Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)**

**Common Dormice are fully protected in law, as are their breeding and resting places. The primary legislation is embodied in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, also by European Directive implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Further consideration resulted with the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.**

Reference to freely available internet data and local sources did not find any records within 5 kilometres of the site.

### **8.1. Habitat Assessment/Search**

The tree and shrub species mix within the hedgerows was considered species poor and sub-optimal in terms of food and a refuge resource for Dormice. The hedgerows have many gaps with both gateways and missing vegetation, which would inhibit connectivity for this species. Also there is little if any connectivity with suitable habitat off site.

### **8.2. Conclusions**

8.2.1. It is considered unlikely that Dormice are present within the hedgerows at the site.

### **8.3. Recommendations**

9.3.1. Planting associated with the development should be predominately native species which occur in the existing hedgerows. Also enhancement planting should be included in the hedgerows to fill gaps.

## 9. Other Protected Species.

No pre-existing information on other protected species within the survey area was found.

No habitat or connectivity with habitat, suitable for other protected species exists at the site.

### *Site Location Map (Google Earth).*





*View of existing site access.*



*View looking northeast along southeastern boundary.*





*View looking towards southwest corner from existing field access.*



*View looking northwest from existing field access.*





*View looking southwest from southeast corner.*



*View looking northwest along northeast boundary.*





*View looking southwest along northwest boundary.*



*View looking northwest along southwest boundary.*



*View looking northeast across development area.*



*View looking southeast from northwest corner.*

