

Summary of Ecological, Archaeological and Agricultural Investigations



Land at Birmingham Road, Hatton Park
April 2016

ECOLOGY

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out by CSA Environmental in August 2015 to identify ecological constraints and opportunities. This included an extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and a desktop study to identify designated wildlife sites and biological records. The site comprises two arable fields with grassland margins and is bounded by hedgerows. Site habitats are unremarkable and no nature conservation designations cover this area.

However, Smith's Covert, located adjacent to the northern boundary, is an Ancient Semi-natural Woodland and identified as a potential Local Wildlife Site and this will need to be taken into consideration during master planning, with a suitable buffer zone preserved. The desktop study returned a record of one uncommon plant which was also found onsite during the Phase 1 survey.

Further surveys will be required to gain further information on presence/absence of various protected species.

There are bat roosting records in close proximity to the site and it is likely bats may use features including hedgerows on site and Smith's Covert woodland on the northern boundary. Several reptile records were returned for Hatton Hill Fields LWS 0.6km south west of the site, but opportunities for reptiles on site are limited to the margins of the arable fields. No great crested newt records were returned and the site offers limited terrestrial habitat for this species. Three water bodies are identified within 500m of the site which will need further investigation. Given the nature of the habitats present it is not anticipated that the site will be important for bird or invertebrate assemblages.

Overall, there are no overriding constraints to development identified and assuming appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented, no overriding ecological constraints to development are anticipated.

ARCHAEOLOGY

An assessment of the potential archaeological resource within the field onsite was carried out in April 2016 to inform on the archaeological implications of proposed development. This included consultation of publicly available archaeological and historical information from documentary, cartographic and aerial photographic resources.

No previous archaeological investigations have been carried out within the Site or the immediate vicinity. There is nothing in the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record to suggest that significant archaeological remains are present in the area, although this may simply reflect the lack of archaeological investigations.

Study of historic maps shows that the boundary between the parishes of Budbrooke and Hatton crossed the central part of the site (just south of the current internal hedgerow). The Ordnance Survey Map of 1925 shows that a building was located in the south-eastern corner of the site, probably an entrance lodge for the access drive which bounds the site to the east and which led to the County Mental Hospital (founded 1852) and the King Edward VII Memorial Chest Hospital (established 1923, c. 500m north-west)). The hospital is well screened from the site by recent residential development and Smith's Covert, therefore no setting issues on designated heritage assets are anticipated. Both the parish boundary (which is likely to have medieval origins) and the 20th century lodge have a low level of archaeological significance.

It is concluded that given the lack of archaeological work in the area and the presence of the parish boundary and lodge, pre-determination surveys including geophysical survey may be requested and, depending on the results, trial trenching may be required. Further consultation is therefore recommended.

AGRICULTURAL

A detailed assessment of agricultural quality and local farming circumstances in connection with land proposed for development was carried out in April 2016. This includes the consideration of the quality of agricultural land in a national, regional and local context and provides an assessment of likely 'opportunities and constraints' associated with proposed development in agricultural land quality terms.

The findings of the investigation determined that most of the site is underlain by bedrock geology described as mudstone, and the remaining as siltstone, part of the Mercia Mudstone Group. The slowly permeable clay loams, clays or silty clays are affected by surface or groundwater and are seasonally waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV). These are predicted to be limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3b. A MAFF Post 1988 ALC survey of the Site conducted in 1988 determined the quality of agricultural land to be limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3b.

As set out in Natural England's Technical Information Note 049 (see Appendix B), Defra is only statutorily consulted where the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (i.e. land in ALC Grades 1, 2 and 3a) will be 20 ha or more. Therefore, Defra would not need to be consulted on the loss of approximately 7.5 ha of Subgrade 3b land as a result of the proposed development. Following the approach of paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), the proposed development would not be contrary to national planning policy involving the development agricultural land.