ECOLOGY AND PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY OF THE LAKE AT HOLLAND PARK, SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE

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1 INTRODUCTION

Scarborough Nixon Associates Ltd has been commissioned by Broadgate Homes Limited to undertake an ecology and protected species survey of the lake at Holland Park, Spalding, Lincolnshire. The survey is required in connection with a future planning application which relates to the extension of this water body.

This report details the methods used, describes the species found on the site, discusses the results and makes recommendations for further work. English names of higher plants are used throughout the text. Plant names are those used by Stace (1995).

2 BACKGROUND AND LEGAL PROTECTION

2.1 Water voles

As of 6th April 2008 the water vole is now fully protected under section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Legal protection makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take (capture) a water vole
- Possess or control a live or dead water vole, or any part of a water vole
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which water voles use for shelter or protection or disturb water voles while they are using such a place
- Sell, offer for sale or advertise for live or dead water voles

2.2 Birds

All common wild birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird

Certain rare breeding birds are listed on Schedule 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). Under this legislation they are afforded the same protection as common wild birds and are also protected against disturbance whilst building a nest or on or near a nest containing eggs/unfledged young.

2.3 Biodiversity and government policy

In addition to the legislation described above, which is in place to safeguard species such as bats (and their roosts) and birds, there is also legislation and policy which imposes duties to take account of statutorily protected species and also to undertake action to prevent loss of biodiversity and species/habitats which have been identified as priorities for the UK. In England and Wales, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, imposes a duty on all public bodies (including Local Authorities and statutory bodies) to conserve biodiversity – including restoring and enhancing a population or habitat. In addition, government planning policy guidance throughout the UK, provided in the National Planning Policy Framework and OPDM Circular 06/2005, requires local planning authorities to take account of protected species issues prior to determination of planning applications.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Site communities and habitats

The survey area occurs at the end of a cul-de-sac on the south west edge of Spalding, Lincolnshire – Grid Reference TF231212. The lake and surrounding grassland is described below. Representative photographs are included in the text.

3.1.1 The lake

The lake, which was created within the last few years as part of the residential development to the north of the site and consists of two areas joined by a narrow channel approximately 25m long by 7m wide. One area to the west, on a north south axis, which measures approximately 80m x 30m and another to the east, on an east west axis, which measures approximately 25m x 80m. The lake is set within an area of grassland.

Dense growth of bulrush *Typha latifolia* and common reed *Phragmites australis* occurs at the edges of the lake, leaving a small amount of open water at the centre of each area. Willow sp *Salix sp* grow around the edges and on the banksides grow great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne,* fescue sp *Festuca sp*, hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, ribwort plantain *Plantago*

lanceolata, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, campion *Silene sp*, horseradish *Armoracia rusticana*, horsetail *Equisetum sp*, perennial sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*, mayweed *Tripleurospermum sp*, field scabious *Knautia arvensis*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, mint *Mentha sp*, tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and Geranium spp. *Geranium sp*.



Photograph 1: Various views of the lake and surrounding grassland

3.1.2 **Grassland**

The closely mown amenity grass around the lake consists of perennial rye-grass, white clover *Trifolium repens*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, thistle *Cirsium sp*, bristly ox-tongue *Picris echioides*, dock sp *Rumex sp*, daisy *Bellis perennis* and black medick *Medicago lupulina*.

To the north of the site areas of grassland have been left uncut; species include meadow grass species, common knapweed, field scabious, bird's-foot trefoil, lady's bedstraw, wild carrot *Daucus carota*, tufted vetch and red clover. These grassland areas are likely to been

seeded when the lake was constructed.

A footpath runs around the north, east and west banks of the lake. The site is used for informal recreation.

3.2 Surrounding habitats and boundaries

The site is situated in the southern most corner of a residential development and is bounded to the north by post and rail fencing. The gardens of residential properties back on to the site. The east, south and west are bounded by temporary site fencing beyond which are arable fields.



Photograph 2: Various views of the grassland and surrounding habitat

4 METHODS

The site was surveyed on 20th September 2013 by Clare Schofield.

During the initial appraisal of the site the protected species considered likely to occur on site were identified. These were:

- Water voles
- Common bird species

The methods used for surveying for these species are given below;

The trees on the banksides/banktops of the lake did not have features which would have potential for use by roosting bats; most were considered to be too immature.

The site was also surveyed and assessed for the habitats and plant species present; this

included an assessment against the Local Wildlife Site Criteria (LWS).

4.1 Data search

The NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Gateway website was consulted in order to check for records of protected species from the area.

4.2 Water voles

The lake was assessed for its potential to support water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and a search was made for signs of use by water voles including feeding stations, burrows, latrine sites, runs through the vegetation and cropped grass around burrow entrances.

4.3 Common bird species

The survey site was searched for signs of use by nesting birds, typically old nests and concentrations of faecal deposits associated with a breeding site.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Data search

The NBN Gateway has records for water voles from the 10km grid square TF22.

5.2 Water voles

No signs of use by water voles were recorded on the lake margins. No further work for this species is considered necessary.

5.3 Common bird species

A small number of common birds were recorded on or adjacent to the site; these are listed below:

woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*

The trees growing on the banks of the lake should be considered to have potential for use by nesting birds. The reeds and marginal vegetation would also have potential to support nesting attempts by birds such as coot *Fulica atra*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* which use the margins of water bodies for breeding.

5.4 Habitats and plant species

The habitats and plant species recorded on the site are common and widespread in the local area and in the country.

The plant species recorded on the site are not listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). No nationally rare or scarce plants as defined by Wiggington (1999) and Stewart *et al* (1994) respectively were found.

The grassland area and the water body would not meet the criteria required to qualify as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The banksides and adjacent grasslands did support some species which are 'scoring species' on the LWS criteria – however it is likely that these areas have been seeded as part of the work to create the lake.

6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Common bird species

Since the habitats associated with the lake have potential to be used for nesting by species of common bird, any work to extend the lake should commence outside the active nesting season which typically runs from March through to late August. If work commences during the bird breeding season, a search for nests should be carried out before they begin, and active nests should be protected until the young fledge.

7 REFERENCES

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