

PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

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Chapel House, Commons Lane, Balderstone, BB2 7LL

Client: Lisa Cooper-Tomlinson

8 August 2013

EED

1. Introduction

A base-line Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken on a 20 metre section of broadleaved hedgerow and adjacent grassland / pasture at Chapel House, Commons Lane, Balderstone, (NGR: SD 632 324) on Wednesday 7 August 2013 between 09.15 and 11.15. The weather conditions were cool, dry and calm.

The proposed development at the site requires provision of equestrian facilities including stables and a training ring. Part of an existing hedgerow will be removed to accommodate the training ground.

The aim of the phase 1 survey is to make an assessment of the wildlife and habitat interest at the site to enable the local planning authority make an informed planning decision with regard to the likely impact of the proposed works on the nature conservation value of the area.

2. Methodology

Desk Study

A targeted desk study was carried out within a radius of 2.5km of the site; the aim of the desk study is to identify the presence of statutory wildlife sites and records of any legally protected species in the area. The search includes an on-line search of National Biodiversity Network (www.nbn.org.uk), Multi Agency Geographical Information System (www.magic.gov.uk) and Natural England's Nature-on-the-Map (www.natureonthemap.org.uk).

The survey follows the guidance in the Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit (JNCC 2010) requiring a site walkover and habitat assessment involving mapping and description of habitats likely to be affected by the proposed works.

Habitat codes in the report are based on the standard NCC alpha-numeric reference codes (Rodwell).

The survey was undertaken by David Fisher (Earthworks Environmental Design – EED); the survey was carried out within the optimal survey period for undertaking Phase 1 surveys.

3. Results

Desk Study

There are several Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) within 2.5km of the site; these include Old Park Wood and Flashers Wood to the east and Jackson's Bank Wood (River Ribble) to the west. There are no BHS sites adjacent to the property or within 0.5km of the site.

Additional searches include NBN records for 10km grid square SD63 and Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan – Long List of Plant Species (2011).

There are no Lancashire / UK BAP species / habitats recorded on this particular site.

Target notes

The overall aim of the target note is to provide a succinct picture of the nature conservation interest of the site. The following target notes provide a brief summary of the plants and animals observed at this location within 50 metres of the hedgerow:

3.1. Hedgerow

Broadleaved hedge, approximate linear length 100 metres (relevant section for removal is 20 metres).
Mean height 3 metres, mean width 2.75 metres.

Originally a quickthorn hedge (*Crataegus monogyna*), this is the predominant species, the hedge also contains a number of other woody species including common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and a small number of small yew saplings (*Taxus baccata*) and some ivy (*Hedera helix*) mostly on ground layer.

Flowering plants growing within 0.5m of the base of the hedge include common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), white deadnettle (*Lamium album*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), broadleaved dock (*R. obtusifolius*), ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) and cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*).

3.2. Semi-improved acid grassland (B1.2)

Sheep-grazed pasture, poorly-drained slightly acidic / neutral grassland.

Common grasses include hairy brome (*Bromus ramosus*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*), creeping bent (*A. stolonifera*). Flowering plants: red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), broad-leaved willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*).

3.3. Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (A1.1.1)

Nearby woodland edge, mature trees surrounding a small pond and forming the field boundary. Species include: alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), ash (*Fraxinus*), sycamore (*Acer*), oak (*Quercus robur*), holly (*Ilex* sp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

3.4. Introduced species / garden ornamentals

The nearby garden contains a variety of introduced trees, shrubs and some conifer hedging, species include: European larch (*Larix decidua*), Cypress sp. (*Chamaecyparis* sp.), Leyland cypress (*x Cupressocyparis leylandii*), western hemlock (*Tsuga* sp.), ornamental cherry (*Prunus* sp.), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*).

3.5. Standing water

There is one shallow pond within the woodland; the pond is approximately 50m from the hedgerow and is and outwith the boundary of the property. The pond appears to be and heavily silted with few marginal plants and is heavily shaded by mature trees.

3.6. Faunal description

A number of woodland bird species were noted during the survey, these include spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), blue tit (*Parus caruleus*), long-tailed tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*), and woodpigeon (*Columba livia*).

Also noted flying over the site: barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*).

The surveyor has also recorded the following EPS species at nearby properties within recent years:

Barn owl (*Tyto alba*) roosting in stone barn at nearby Lane Ends (SD628 327)

Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) in stone barn at nearby Lane Ends (SD628 327)

Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) large bat maternity roost in house (SD633 321)

Common pipistrelle maternity roost (Balderstone Primary School (SD 632 323))

4. Evaluation / Impact Assessment

Benefits provided by the hedge

The overall wildlife value of this hedgerow is relatively low in terms of species diversity. The surveyed section of hedgerow (figure 1 - Appendix A) has not been particularly well maintained over recent years and the trees have become 'leggy' with many gaps appearing near the base to a height of about 1 metre; consequently the hedge bottom has become partly trampled by sheep thereby reducing the potential value of the hedge to wildlife.

The greatest benefit provided by the hedge is the production of flowers in spring and early summer (providing nectar and pollen for bees and other insects) and the autumnal fruits (attractive to a wide variety of birds and some insects). The hedge also provides shelter to roosting birds; foraging birds and bats will also use the protection of any linear feature for safety and commuting flight between habitats.

The loss of this section of hedge is unlikely to have any significant effect on nesting wild birds or feeding and foraging bats and there are no significant plant species present. The hedge is surrounded by permanent grassland with low species diversity; those species which are present are mostly common ruderal plants and widespread throughout the district.

The site is not adjacent to a designated wildlife site and there are no records of protected species at this location although several Lancashire / UK BAP are recorded within the 10km grid square (SD 63).

Impacts / risk assessment

The development requires the removal of one 20m section as shown in figures 1 to 7 (Appendix A / B); all neighbouring trees and hedges will be unaffected and there will be no additional loss of woodland habitat at the site.

Access to the site (across an adjoining field) and removal of the hedge will cause some local disturbance whilst the works are in progress therefore timing constraints are required to remove or significantly reduce the impact of the works on nesting birds. The works should be carried out when nesting birds are least likely to be present and must avoid any disturbance to the site between April and July inclusive.

Works should be undertaken during the autumn and winter period and be completed before the bird nesting season begins. Due to the loss of potential bird nesting habitat the optimal period for undertaking these works is September to March.

5. Recommendations

This section outlines the measures that are required to ensure that:

- (1) works are carried out at the appropriate time of year when there is least chance of disturbing, injuring or killing wild birds and their nests (**mitigation measures**)
- (2) enhancement works are undertaken to compensate for loss of habitat (**compensation measures**).

5.1 Mitigation measures (breeding birds)

Avoid carrying out works during the months of April May June and July when nesting birds are most vulnerable to disturbance. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) gives protection to wild birds (with certain exceptions) their nests and eggs during the breeding season. It is illegal to disturb any wild bird (listed as schedule 1) while it is nest building, at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb a dependent young.

All tree / shrub removal must take place outside the breeding season (September to March).

5.2 Compensation measures

A key element of Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9) is the emphasis on enhancements. Paragraph 14 states that *'development proposals provide many opportunities for building in beneficial biodiversity or geological features as part of good design. When considering proposals, local planning authorities should maximise such opportunities in and around developments, using planning obligations where appropriate'*.

To compensate for loss of natural nesting sites, alternative nesting opportunities are required as follows:

- (i) **PROVIDE** 4 No. open-fronted birds boxes and 2 No. hole front boxes on nearby buildings
- (ii) **PROVIDE** 8 No. berry-bearing tree species as close to the new development as possible.

Suitable trees and shrub species include: Wayfaring tree (*Viburnum lantana*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), mountain ash or rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), bird cherry (*Prunus padus*), gean or wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera secies*), willow (*Salix species*), Ivy (*Hedera species*), hazel (*Corylus*).

6. SUMMARY

The main impact of the proposed development will be the removal of a 20 metre section of hawthorn hedge; the main losses will be potential loss of bird nesting and roosting habitat and loss of several woody shrubs and climbers including hawthorn, elder, bramble and ivy. All remaining hedges and woodland edge trees will remain and there will be no significant disturbance to local wildlife if the works are carried out in a sensitive manner and at a time of year that avoids the main bird nesting season.

Mitigation and compensation measures are recommended; these are proportionate to the loss of habitat. Further surveys are not required (ie. Phase 2 habitat survey) and the works should proceed with due care and vigilance to ensure that any nesting wild birds and other wildlife species are not accidentally / deliberately disturbed injured or killed.

7. APPENDIX A



Figure 1: view from west showing 20 metre section of hedge affected by proposed works

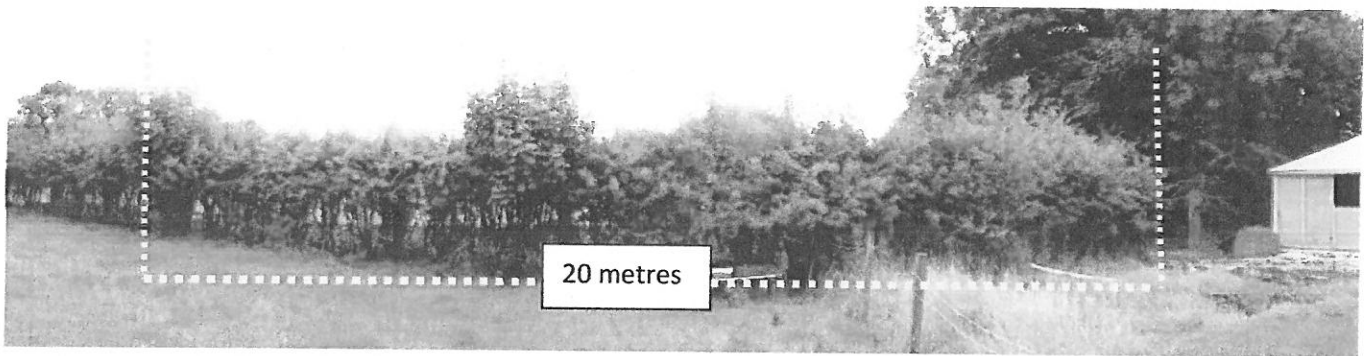


Figure 2:

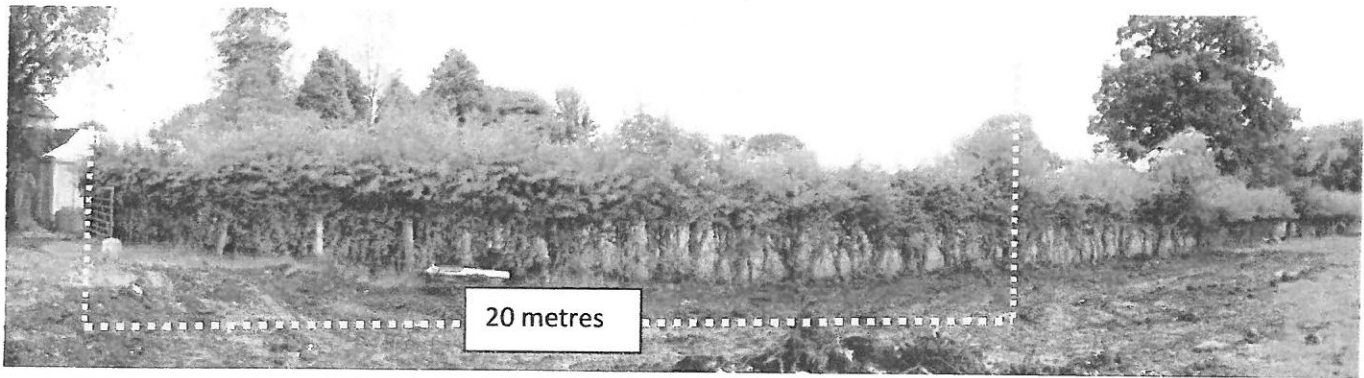


Figure 3: view from east



Figure 4: view from east showing section of hedge within wider context of woodland edge (left) and retained hedgerow

APPENDIX B

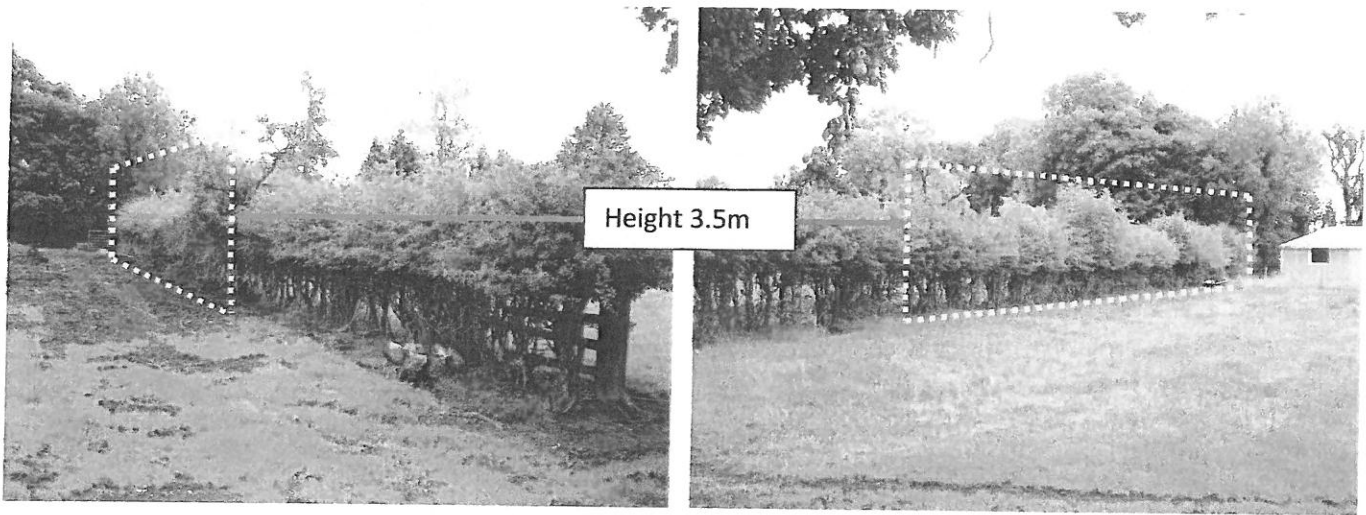


Figure 5: hedge row viewed from north-east

Figure 6: view from north-west

Figure 7: Showing key species within hedge:

Ap= sycamore; Cm= hawthorn; Fe= ash; Hh= Ivy Ps= blackthorn; Sn= elder; Tb= Yew

