

# **EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY OF LAND AT PETRE WOOD, LANGHO, LANCASHIRE**

**2019**



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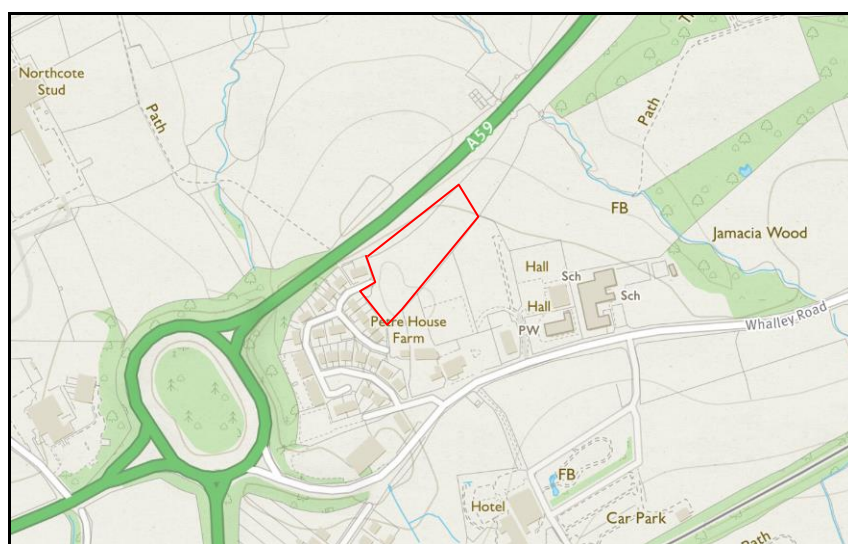
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2019 by Hargreaves to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of a parcel of land at Petre Wood, Langho, Lancashire. The site will be the subject of a planning application for residential development consisting of 32no. properties with associated landscaping (particularly at the eastern end), parking and access roads.
- 1.2 The site is situated to the east of Petre Wood Drive, Langho, Lancashire (O.S. grid reference: SD 71038 35018 – see Figure 1). The site comprises a single field of unmanaged, improved grassland. Due to the lack of management, natural succession has resulted in large areas of ruderal vegetation and marshy grassland establishing. The site is bordered with hedgerows and fencing. The site lies on the north-eastern fringes of Langho village. To the north of the site lies the A59 with pastoral farmland further north and east. To the west is an area of recently developed housing and to the south are scattered houses, a school, hotel and golf course.
- 1.3 The aims of the surveys were to:
- Describe and map the habitats present on the site
  - Assess the potential for protected species to be present on the site or just outside the immediate site boundary
  - Identify where further survey may be necessary.



**Figure 1 showing the location of the site within the red line boundary**

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at each habitat and the abundance of each species was noted. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2010. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.
- 2.2 During the Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt and assessing the potential for any buildings or mature trees to be used by bats.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.
- 2.4 Ben Crossthwaite (Ecologist) undertook the survey on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The weather was cool and overcast with showers. Ben has over four years of experience of habitat and protected species surveys and is fully trained. February is a sub-optimal time of the year for botanical work, however due to the type of habitats present on site, a thorough assessment could be undertaken. The site was fully accessible and there were no constraints to the survey.

## **3.0 RESULTS**

### **HABITATS**

- 3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats present on site are described below.

#### **Improved Grassland/Marshy Grassland Mosaic**

- 3.2 This habitat is the most abundant on site (see Photograph 1). The site appears to have a history of intensive management which has waned. This has resulted in both ruderal and marshy grassland species establishing. The areas of improved grassland/marshy grassland mosaic have a tall sward height across its entirety. Dominant species include Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Soft-rush *Juncus effusus*. Herbaceous species present include Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Occasional occurring species are Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*.



**Photograph 1 showing the improved grassland/marshy grassland mosaic**

#### **Scattered Trees**

- 3.3 A small number of scattered trees are present on site. These are largely young/semi-mature. However, one dead mature Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is located on the western part of site (see Photograph 2). Other species present include Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.





**Photograph 2 showing the dead Sycamore tree on site**

### **Hedgerows**

- 3.4 Two sections of hedgerow occur on the southern borders of the site. These are both managed and comprise Leyland Cypress *Cupressus leylandii* only (see Photograph 3). The ground flora beneath is dominated by improved grassland and ruderal species.



**Photograph 3 showing one of the hedgerows on site**

### **Tall, Ruderal Herb**

- 3.5 This habitat is present along the northern, eastern and western peripheries of the site (see Photograph 4). Abundant species include Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Creeping-thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Willowherb species *Epilobium* sp. Less common species include Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.



**Photograph 4 showing one of the areas of tall, ruderal herb**

### **Improved Grassland**

- 3.6 A small area of unmanaged, improved grassland lies to the south of the site. Although marshy grassland species are present such as Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, these sparsely occur with improved grassland species dominating (see Photograph 5). These include Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Crested Dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.



**Photograph 5 showing the improved grassland on site**



### **Scattered Scrub**

- 3.7 Small amounts of scattered scrub occur along the southern boundary of the site. This includes Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* saplings.

### **Introduced Shrub**

- 3.8 Introduced shrub has crossed over the boundary fence from a neighbouring garden on the south-westerly border (see Photograph 6). The introduced shrub is dominated by Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus* and Cypress species *Chamaecyparis/Cupressocyparis* sp.



**Photograph 6 showing the introduced shrub**

### **Ephemeral Pool**

- 3.9 A small area of standing water is located along the north-western boundary of the site (see Photograph 7). The water lies at the foot of sloped ground and adjacent to the hardstanding of the neighbouring dwelling. No aquatic vegetation is present. The pool is covered with ruderal vegetation, improved grassland and marshy grassland species.



**Photograph 7 showing part of the ephemeral pool**



### **Fencing**

- 3.10 Fencing occurs on many of the site boundaries. The fencing types include post and wire, post and slat, domestic panel type fencing and metal railing (see Photographs 8 and 9).



**Photograph 8 showing the post and slat fencing**



**Photograph 9 showing the metal railing**

### **Bare Ground**

- 3.11 A small area of bare ground is located towards the western boundary of the site (see Photograph 9). This area includes a section of pavement and road used as a turning space.

### **Farm Equipment**

- 3.12 A few pieces of old farm equipment are located towards the southern boundary of the site (see Photograph 10). These are overgrown with improved grassland and ruderal species.



**Photograph 10 showing the old farm equipment**

### **INVASIVE SPECIES**

- 3.13 No non-native, invasive species, as listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), were found on or adjacent to the site.

### **PROTECTED SPECIES**

#### **Badger**

- 3.14 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act, for example, makes it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.
- 3.15 No evidence of Badger activity was located on the site. No Badger setts were located within the site or on the immediate boundaries of the site.

#### **Bats**

- 3.16 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006). It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost.
- 3.17 No buildings exist on site. All the trees were inspected for potential bat roosting features, such as cavities, limb damage or peeling bark. None of the trees on site support such features. Bats use linear landscape features for foraging and commuting and it is possible that bats forage and commute over the site, particularly the hedgerows.

### **Great Crested Newt**

- 3.18 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.19 No ponds exist on site or within 250 metres of the site. A very small ephemeral pool exists on site. This is shallow and full of grasses and ruderal species, with no aquatic vegetation present. It is sub-optimal Great Crested Newt breeding habitat.
- 3.20 The site supports suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. The tall sward height of the unmanaged improved grassland/marshy grassland, improved grassland and tall, ruderal herb, as well as the hedgerows, offers cover and from predation and foraging and commuting habitat.

### **Nesting Birds**

- 3.21 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.22 The scattered trees, introduced shrub and hedgerows provide suitable nesting habitat for passerines. The size of the site, proximity to extensive cover and elevated perches for predatory birds (such as the trees, telegraph poles/lines) reduce the suitability of the site for ground-nesting birds.

### **PROTECTED SITES**

- 3.23 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory protected site, Harper Clough and Smaller Delph Quarries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies over 3km from the proposed development site. This SSSI is designated for its geological features.
- 3.24 No non-statutory sites could be found within 2.5km of the site.



## **4.0 ASSESSMENT**

### **HABITATS**

- 4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- 4.2 The proposed development site supports species-poor improved grassland, improved grassland/marshy grassland mosaic and ruderal vegetation. These habitats are of limited ecological value, however, the lack of management allowing the sward height to grow offers cover for wildlife. The hedgerows and scattered trees have a higher ecological value as they also offer cover for wildlife and nesting habitats for birds.

### **Development Context**

- 4.3 The proposed development involves the loss of species-poor improved grassland, improved grassland/marshy grassland mosaic and ruderal vegetation. It is recommended that the retained boundary habitats (hedgerows) be protected during construction with measures including root protection zones and a sensitive lighting scheme, where appropriate. No specific habitat compensation is necessary given the ecological value of habitats to be lost, although planting up of the open boundaries with native species-rich hedgerows will bring biodiversity gain to the site. The provision of gardens and soft landscaping also has the potential to bring biodiversity gain to the site. The eastern end of the site will be a landscaped open area, which will further enhance the ecological value of the site.

### **PROTECTED SPECIES**

#### **Badger**

- 4.4 No evidence of Badger activity or Badger setts were found on the site. It is likely that the development will not impact on Badgers in the area.

#### **Bats**

- 4.5 No buildings exist on site. All the trees were assessed for Potential Roost Features (PRF's) from ground level. None of the trees on site support any kind of PRF. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme be adopted to protect the trees and hedgerows as potential bat foraging and commuting habitat.

#### **Great Crested Newt**

- 4.6 No ponds exist on site or within 250 metres. The proposed development site supports limited suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. Given the lack of breeding habitat in the locality, Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development and no further Great Crested Newt surveys work is necessary.

### **Nesting Birds**

- 4.7 The hedgerows and scattered trees on the site support suitable nesting habitats for birds. It is recommended to protect as much of these habitats as practical. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.

### **PROTECTED SITES**

- 4.8 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory protected site, Harper Clough and Smaller Delph Quarries SSSI is over 3km from the proposed development site. The protected sites are all separated from the proposed development site by adequate buffer zones including roads, railways and farmland. Because of this, it is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact on the protected sites from the development.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Further Survey**

- 5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** - If any work to the hedgerows and scattered trees on site are to be carried out within the bird nesting season (generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required by experienced personnel immediately prior to work commencing.

### **Habitat Enhancement**

- 5.2 It is recommended that the following measures are taken into account if a landscaping plan is produced for the red line boundary, to increase the biodiversity value of the site:

- Tree and shrub planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.
- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.
- Bird and/or bat boxes could be erected onto new dwellings and/or retained trees.



## **6.0 REFERENCES**

JNCC. *Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*, JNCC, Updated 2010.

Preston, C.D., Pearman, D. & Dines, T. (2002). *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*. Oxford University Press.

Stace, C. A. (2010). *New Flora of the British Isles, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Cambridge University Press.

PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP

