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Dear Ben

LONGRIDGE PHASE 3 PLANNING APPLICATION – UPDATE ECOLOGY SURVEY 2023

Background

This letter report has been prepared by Penny Anderson Associates Limited (PAA), consultant ecologists, on behalf of Tilia Homes (Northern) in connection with proposed changes to the layout of Phase 3 of the approved residential development located off Preston Road, Longridge (hereafter referred to as the 'site').

The purpose of the letter report is to present the methods and results of an update ecology walkover survey carried out in January 2023 within which the Phase 3 development is located. The report presents a brief evaluation of the habitats present and any constraints associated with habitats or protected species within the proposed footprint. Recommendations are made for any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

It should be noted that the wider development site within which the Phase 3 development is located has previously been surveyed on numerous occasions and that there is a wealth of pre-existing ecology survey data which has been used, alongside the update walkover results, to inform the recommendations set out in this report. In addition, the site is subject to a European Protected Species Licence granted by Natural England in 2018 in relation to great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*, GCN). The results of these previous surveys and requirements of the newt licence are summarised below, where relevant.

Methods

The update walkover survey comprised an extended Phase 1 habitat survey conducted by Sacha Rogers (CEnv, MCIEEM¹), Managing Director, PAA on 16th January 2023. The survey methodology was based on guidance set out in the *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey* (JNCC 2010²). This entailed mapping and describing habitats and collating key plant species information across the area delineated for the survey. The broad habitat types were mapped, with each habitat type coded according to the standard JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Survey procedure (JNCC 2010²). The plant species present within the site are presented below, with both common and scientific names given (Stace 2019³).

The survey was 'extended' (IEA 1995⁴) to identify evidence of, or potential for notable and protected species.

Survey Limitations

The update survey was conducted at a sub-optimal time of year when some plant species may not be visible or readily identifiable. This was mitigated by the survey being undertaken by an experienced botanist able to identify most plant species in their vegetative state, coupled with the availability of pre-existing survey data. Overall, therefore, the results are considered reliable and suitable to support this planning application.

¹ Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

² JNCC, 2010. *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit*. JNCC.

³ Stace, C., 2019. *New Flora of the British Isles*. Fourth Edition. C&M Floristics.

⁴ IEA, 1995. *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment*. Chapman and Hall.



Results

Habitats

The results of the update survey are presented in Figure 1 (enclosed) and described below. The wider site within which the Phase 3 development sits is currently under construction. The eastern portion of the site (Phase 1 of the development) is largely completed with many of the residential units now in occupation. An operational site compound, including concrete batching plant, is located at the northern tip of this area and will form part of the Phase 3 development in due course.

The central portion of the site (Phase 2 development) is currently under construction.

Phase 3 (which is the subject of this planning application) is located in the western portion of the site and comprises a large area of poor semi-improved grassland that has become established over former arable land. The grassland has been un-managed since 2018 and is now tall and tussocky (see Photo 1). It is species-poor with species limited mainly to coarser grasses, including cock's-foot⁵, perennial rye-grass and Yorkshire-fog with false oat-grass toward the edges. Forbs are dominated by broad-leaved dock, common nettle, creeping thistle and creeping buttercup, which are able to tolerate the high nutrient levels of the former arable land. Other species occurring occasionally to frequently include red fescue, creeping bent, canary reed-grass, hard rush, soft-rush, spear thistle and common mouse ear with the species reflecting poorly drained ground conditions.



Photo 1 Poor semi-improved grassland habitat within the Phase 3 development area

The former boundary hedgerows H1, H2, H6 and H7 are still present and intact, but former hedgerows H3, H5 and H8 have been removed and H4 partially removed to facilitate development. A brief description of the remaining hedgerows is provided below. Boundary ditches D1 and D2 remain *in situ* and comprise shallow, flowing watercourses.

⁵ See previous reports for scientific names of plant species

Table 1 Brief Description of Hedgerows

Hedge No.	Size	Description	Hedge Species
H1	1.5m (W) x 2.5m (H)	Mature, unmanaged hedgerow dominated by hawthorn with other native species occurring infrequently. Several mature trees including some with potential to support roosting bats. Ground flora includes garlic mustard, red campion, hart's-tongue fern.	Hawthorn, hazel, ash
H2	1.5m (W) x 2 - 2.5m (H)	Mature, hawthorn-dominated hedgerow, gappy in places. Managed at both ends with unmanaged section in middle. Occasional mature trees including some with potential to support roosting bats. Ground flora includes cleavers, hogweed, Yorkshire-fog, common nettle, occasional red campion.	Hawthorn
H4	1.5m (W) x 2m (H)	Short section of defunct, mature hawthorn hedge. A remnant of former field boundary. Largely bare ground underneath hedge, some fallen deadwood.	Hawthorn
H6	1m (W) x 1.5m (H)	Gappy, sparsely vegetated hedgerow with occasional semi-mature shrub species interspersed with patches of bramble.	Hawthorn, bramble
H7	1m (W) x 1.5m (H)	Short section of recently planted hedgerow. Tree guards still in place.	Hawthorn,

Table 2 Brief Description of Ditches

Ditch No.	Dimensions	Description	Aquatic and Marginal Species
D1	Channel width c.1m, water depth 0.02 - 0.05m	Deep, steep-sided ditch with shallow, fast flowing water over a sandy substrate. Vegetated earth banks, with bare patches in places where heavily shaded by overhanging hedgerow/scrub. Some, limited aquatic vegetation present. Invasive species Himalayan balsam abundant.	Canary reed-grass
D2	Channel width c.1m, water depth 0.02 - 0.05m	Deep, steep-sided ditch with shallow, fast flowing water. Water turbid on day of survey. Vegetated earth banks, with bare patches in places where heavily shaded by overhanging hedgerow/scrub. No aquatic vegetation (see description for H2 for ground flora along base of hedgerow). Invasive species Himalayan balsam present.	None

The former field trees have largely been removed but hedgerow trees have been retained, along with two semi-mature alders located in the central portion of the site. A new mitigation pond (NP5) has been created within this corridor to provide a stepping-stone for GCN to move through the corridor (see Photo 2).



Photo 2 Two semi-mature alder trees in central portion of site with newly created mitigation pond NP5 in foreground.

Existing ponds P6, P7, P8 and P11 (Photos 3 to 6) have been safeguarded within a central wildlife corridor that is contained within one-way newt fencing and acts as the receptor area for GCN previously captured from the development footprint.



Photos 3 to 6. Top left – Pond P6; Bottom left - Pond P7; Top right – P8; Bottom right – P11

A large area of public open space has been created in the south-east of the site comprising semi-improved grassland, new ponds (NP1, NP2, NP3 and NP4) and extensive areas of new, native scrub and tree planting. Two balancing ponds (un-numbered) have also been created in the south/south-east of the site.

Protected Species

The wider site within which the Phase 3 development is located is known to support a medium population of GCN as well as smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*) and common frog (*Rana temporaria*). Baseline GCN surveys were completed in 2018 and a licence to capture and translocate GCN from the development footprint was granted by Natural England in 2018, with GCN being placed into a receptor area that contains existing ponds P6, P7, P8 and P11. GCN monitoring surveys were carried out in 2021 and 2022 with a medium population recorded in 2021 and GCN recorded as present in 2022 (note - it was not possible to conduct population size class surveys in 2022 due to the very dry spring and low water levels so eDNA⁶ surveys were conducted instead). The GCN monitoring has confirmed that the population status of GCN has been maintained to-date. Further monitoring is to be carried out in 2024, 2026, 2028 and 2030.

Under this newt licence, the majority of the Phase 3 development area was subject to a GCN translocation in summer 2022 and is now ready for development. Temporary GCN fencing is *in situ* around the development footprint to prevent GCN from entering the active construction areas and will remain in place until all development is complete. However, a small extension at the northern edge of the Phase 3 development area will encroach into the fenced receptor site and this will require a modification to the newt licence to be approved by Natural England with additional hand searches for GCN from these small areas.

The GCN licence requires existing and new ponds and associated terrestrial habitats to be safeguarded and managed for GCN in the long-term. This includes the habitats in the large area of public open space in the south-east as well as the central corridor running through the site that contains ponds P6, P7, P8, P11 and mitigation pond NP5.

⁶ Environmental DNA

The Phase 3 development area has relatively limited potential to support other protected or notable species, and this is currently limited to foraging birds associated with the boundary hedgerows and ponds, such as foraging starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) which were observed on the day of survey. The semi-mature alder trees (Photo 2) do not contain any features capable of supporting roosting bats and there is no evidence of, or potential for, other species such as badger (*Meles meles*).

Conclusion

The results of the update habitat survey confirm that the habitat within the Phase 3 development area comprises unmanaged species-poor grassland. This habitat is of negligible intrinsic ecological value, lacking in species and structural diversity.

A habitat corridor containing species-poor grassland, existing and new ponds (P6, P7, P8, P11 and NP5) and two semi-mature alder trees is present running centrally through the site and this will be retained and managed for GCN. Boundary hedgerows H1 (and associated ditch D2), H6 and part of H4 are present in the vicinity of the Phase 3 development area and will also be retained and incorporated in the landscaped public open space.

The site supports a medium population of GCN which has previously been captured and translocated from the development footprint and placed within the wildlife corridor. Temporary amphibian fencing is *in situ* around the active development footprint to prevent GCN from re-entering the construction area. With the exception of two small areas of encroachment into the newt receptor area (to be covered by a modification to the newt licence, and subject to additional hand searches for GCN), the development of the Phase 3 area will have no impact on GCN which will be safeguarded within the adjacent receptor area for the duration of construction.

The Phase 3 development is likely to displace a modest number of foraging birds from within the immediate development footprint but the core breeding habitats, namely boundary hedgerows and ponds are retained, and the large area of public open space created in the south-east of the wider site also provides suitable new habitat for foraging and ground nesting bird species, such as lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) which were observed breeding here during GCN monitoring surveys in spring 2022.

Overall, the Phase 3 development would not result in the loss of any habitat of value, and there would be only a minor additional impact on GCN compared with the approved scheme, resulting in the loss of a small additional area of land within the newt receptor site. This impacted will be mitigated by implementing additional hand searches. The majority of the newt receptor area will be retained and managed for GCN, along with the large area of public open space to the south-east.

No further ecological surveys are considered necessary and, with the above recommended mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that there would be no significant impact on ecology.

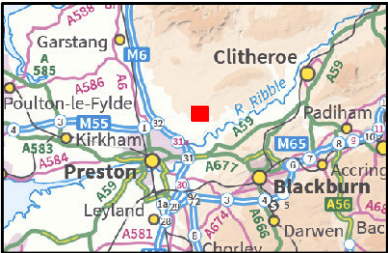
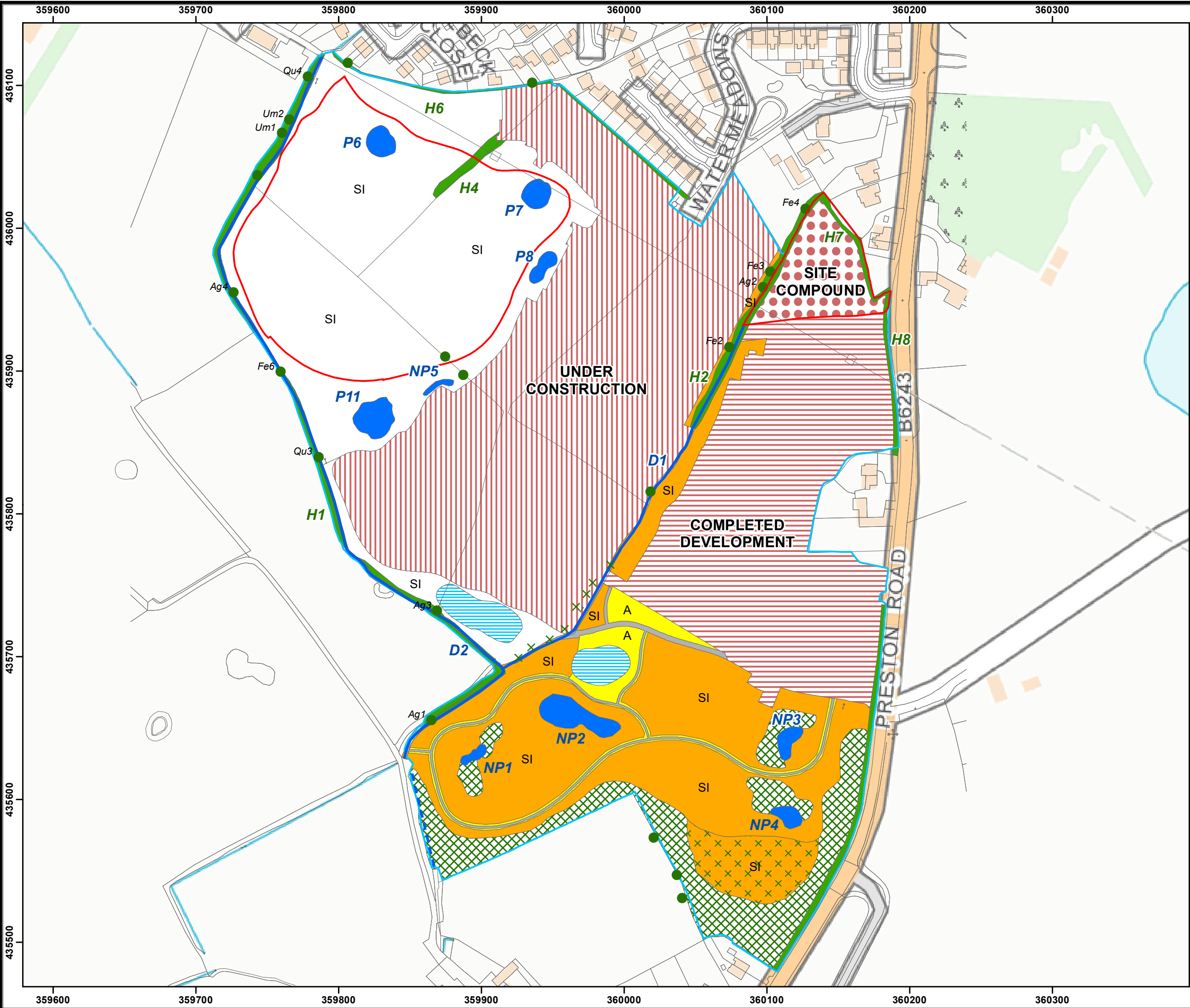
I trust that the above is helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely
For and on behalf of
PENNY ANDERSON ASSOCIATES LTD



Sacha Rogers
Managing Director

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Legend

- Phase 3 Development Area
- Survey area
- Habitat**
- Native trees and scrub
- SI Neutral semi-improved grassland
- SIx Neutral semi-improved grassland with scattered scrub
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- Pond
- Balancing pond
- A Amenity grassland
- Species-poor hedge
- Path/hardstanding
- Site compound
- Under construction
- Completed development
- Running water
- Dry ditch
- Broadleaved tree
- Scattered scrub

British National Grid
Projection: Transverse Mercator
False Easting: 400000.000000
False Northing: -100000.000000
Central Meridian: -2.000000
Scale Factor: 0.999601
Latitude Of Origin: 49.000000

ISO A3

0 10 20 40 60 80 Metres

KIER

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Project Name
Preston Road, Longridge

Discipline
Ecology

Title
**Figure 1 Habitat Survey
Jan 2023**

Scale 1:2,500	Drawing No. Fig 1	
Drawn By CC	Originator SRG	Date 19/01/2023
PAA Ref.		Revision 1.0