

LEGGATTS CAMPUS  
NORTH WATFORD

EXTENDED PHASE 1  
HABITAT  
SURVEY REPORT

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for

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Date:	August 2007
Revision:	WIM16247PH1 - A

## EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY REPORT

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 ACD Landscape Architects was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey to carry out an extended Phase 1 habitat survey for a proposed development site on Leggatts Campus, North Watford.
- 1.2 The objectives of the extended Phase 1 habitat survey were to:
- produce a map of the main ecological features within the site and compile a plant species list for each habitat type;
  - make an initial assessment of the presence or likely absence of species of conservation concern;
  - identify any legal and planning policy constraints relevant to nature conservation which may affect the development;
  - determine any potential further ecological issues; and,
  - determine the need for further surveys and mitigation.

### 2.0 METHODOLOGY

#### Desk study

- 2.1 No formal desk study was commissioned but MAGIC web-site's interactive map and Watford Borough Council's web-site was reviewed to identify statutory sites within a 2 km radius of the site.
- 2.2 The NBN Gateway was also selectively interrogated and the Watford borough Council web-site reviewed in an attempt to gain any records for notable species/species groups (e.g. bats) in order to identify any potential ecological constraints associated with the site.

#### Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.3 An extended Phase 1 survey (JNCC, 1993; IEA, 1995) of the proposed development site was undertaken. This is a standard technique for obtaining baseline ecological information for areas of land, including proposed development sites.
- 2.4 The standard habitat definitions were used and the dominant and readily identifiable higher plant species identified in each of the various habitat parcels were recorded and their abundance was assessed on the DAFOR scale:
- D Dominant
  - A Abundant
  - F Frequent
  - O Occasional
  - R Rare
  - L Locally, appended to any of the above five categories to reflect local distribution within the site
- 2.5 These scores represent the abundance within the defined area only and do not reflect national or regional abundances.

- 2.6 Additionally, incidental records of fauna were also made during the survey and the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected species and other species of conservation concern, including Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species.

**Survey Date and Limitations**

- 2.7 The field survey was carried out on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 by a suitably qualified and experienced surveyor and access was available to the entire site.
- 2.8 The field survey was conducted at an optimal time of year for botanical recording.

## 3.0 RESULTS

### Desk study

#### 3.1 *Designated Sites*

3.2 One statutorily protected site has been identified within c. 2 km of the site, namely the 5.25 hectare Harebreaks Wood. This wood, which is understood to immediately abut part of the southern boundary of the application site, is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a County Wildlife Site as well as qualifying as Ancient Woodland.

3.3 A description of this woodland is provided on the web pages of Watford Borough Council, which is re-produced as follows:

3.4 'An ancient semi-natural woodland with a canopy of oak, ash and cherry, with some magnificent large oak and beech standards. Some hazel and hornbeam coppice is present and the ground flora includes ancient woodland indicators such as abundant bluebells and patches of dogs mercury, wood sorrel, wood-sedge, wood melick, pignut and three-veined sandwort. The wood is a remnant of a much larger area of woodland, formerly known as Longspring and Harebreaks Wood. The area of amenity grassland around the Adventure Playground is being reclaimed as part of the wood and the Friends of Harebreaks Wood have carried out extensive planting of native trees in this area.'

3.5 The web-site also provides a list of faunal species which the woodland supports, bulleted as follows:

- great-spotted woodpecker
- treecreeper
- nuthatch
- song thrush
- mistle thrush
- long-tailed tit
- great tit
- blue tit
- crow
- rook
- chiffchaff
- blackcap
- fox
- muntjac deer
- pipistrelle bat

#### 3.6 *Species of Conservation Concern*

- 3.7 Based upon the limited desk study (i.e. interrogation of the NBN Gateway for bat records and the description of Harebreaks Wood on the Watford Borough Council web-site) which has been undertaken, the following species of conservation concern which may be relevant to the site re-development have been identified in close proximity to the site:
- Pipistrelle bat (a protected and UKBAP species), recorded in Harebreaks Wood and The Lodge, North Watford Cemetery (70 m north of the site and beyond Northwestern Avenue, recorded in 1989)
  - bird species of conservation concern – specifically song thrush (a Red List and UKBAP species) and mistle thrush and green woodpecker (an Amber List species) have been recorded in Harebreaks Wood

### **Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey**

- 3.8 A map showing the habitats present within the proposed development is given on Figure 1. The full list of plant species recorded during the survey is given in Appendix 1. Photographs depicting the main ecological features may be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.9 The proposed development site comprises the area covered by the Leggatts Campus buildings and car parks. The site lies adjacent to the North Western Avenue in the north of Watford and is neighboured by:
- Residential properties to the west;
  - North Western Avenue to the north;
  - A primary school to the east; and,
  - Bill Everett Centre and Harebreaks Wood to the south
- 3.10 Nine habitat types were identified within, or on the boundary of, the proposed development site, as follows:
- Dense scrub
  - Scattered trees
  - Tall ruderal vegetation
  - Amenity grassland
  - Ephemeral / short perennial vegetation
  - Introduced shrub
  - Species-poor hedgerow with trees
  - Buildings
  - Hard standing

3.11 These habitats are described below and their distribution is shown in Figure 1.

#### **3.12 *Dense scrub***

A small, inaccessible pocket of bramble-dominated scrub occurs behind the garages (B5) and along the western boundary fence; this area is too small to be shown upon Figure 1.

### 3.13 *Scattered trees*

3.14 Numerous scattered broad-leaved trees occur throughout the site including:

- Three mature pedunculate oaks (T1, T2, and T3) which occur adjacent to the northern car park;
- Thirty-eight young cherry, purple prunus and London Plane trees (SBT1) which form an avenue along the north-eastern access road with a further line along the edge of the eastern car park;
- A large mature cherry (T4) with a younger cherry adjacent to it which occur on the northern edge of the north car park;
- Whitebeam, cherry and purple maple trees, which have been planted within the shrub borders on the southern boundary of the site adjacent to building (B1), to the north of building B2 and adjacent to the eastern end of the northern car park;
- Two larch trees which have been planted either side of the main entrance on the northern side of building B2 and another occurs adjacent to this building's north west corner;
- A mature pedunculate oak and cherry (T5) which are growing together on the southern boundary adjacent to Harebreaks Wood;
- Occasional oak, ash and young hazel which occur along the chain link and iron railing fence line running north/south between the western boundary of the site and the access road to the neighbouring houses back gardens and garages; and,
- Scattered trees in the garden of building B10 (not shown on Figure 1) at the south-eastern corner of the site which include holly, false cypress, cherry and yew.

3.15 The majority of these trees were noted to possess trunk diameters in excess of 100mm, as were most of the trees in hedgerows PH1 and PH2.

3.16 Indicative locations of these trees are given in Figure 1.

3.17 In addition many other trees which occur off-site but within 3 metres of the site boundary were also considered to have trunks of greater than 100mm in diameter, including the majority of trees in Harebreaks Wood and within the gardens adjacent to the western boundary.

### 3.18 *Tall ruderal vegetation*

3.19 Small areas of tall ruderal vegetation were noted on-site in the north-east corner (TR1) and in the overgrown garden of building 10 (TR2). The plant species composition of TR1 and TR2 are described in turn as follows:

- TR1: abundant common nettle with frequent coarse grasses, ground elder, creeping thistle, mugwort, knapweed and plantain, with occasional toadflax.
- TR2: frequent common ragwort, red clover, Canadian fleabane and false-oat grass with occasional common nettle and ribwort plantain.

### 3.20 *Ephemeral / short perennial vegetation*

3.21 Ephemeral / short perennial vegetation occurs along the western edge of the site around the edges of concrete hard standing and close to the some of the buildings. Species which occurred at least occasionally include annual meadow-grass, ribwort plantain, petty spurge, prickly and smooth sow thistles, hedge mustard and prickly lettuce. Other species were noted in lower abundances and these are listed in Appendix 1.

### 3.22 *Amenity grassland*

3.23 Amenity grassland is the dominant semi-natural habitat on site, the majority being the playing field to the east of the campus buildings. Several smaller areas occur closer to the buildings both to north and south. The most abundant species was perennial rye-grass with frequent daisy, dandelion, greater and ribwort plantains and knotgrass. Other species which were noted are listed in Appendix 1.

### 3.24 *Introduced shrub*

Areas of introduced shrub occur adjacent to the buildings and car parks. The planting includes frequent cotoneaster and hedge veronicas with occasional firethorn, barberry, sapphire berry, shrubby ragwort, roses and laurel. Other species that occur at lower densities are included in the plant species list in Appendix 1.

### 3.25 *Species-poor hedgerow with trees*

3.26 Two species-poor hedgerows with trees (PH1 and PH2) occur within the site, as follows:

- PH1 - c. 3 metre high hawthorn-dominated hedge with occasional dogwood and field maple along the majority of the northern boundary of the site, adjacent to the North Western Avenue. This hedge also includes oak, cherry, ash and field maple trees within and adjacent to it; and,
- PH2 – c. 2.5-3 m high hawthorn hedge with cherry and field maple trees, along the northern boundary between the two access roads to North Western Avenue.

### 3.27 *Buildings*

There are ten buildings on site ranging from the main campus buildings to peripheral garages and electricity substations. These are listed as follows:

- Building 1 (B1) – two storey brick built structure with tiled pitched roof. This building has two entirely enclosed courtyards;
- Building 2 (B2) – predominantly two storey metal building joined to a one storey wing to the north east by a glass covered atrium, also containing an enclosed courtyard (C3);
- Building 3 (B3) – one storey metal building joined to the main building (B2) by a glass covered corridor;
- Building 4 (B4) – brick built two storey building with tiled pitched roof;
- Building 5 (B5) - four concrete garages with two metal shipping containers to the north and electricity substation to the south;
- Building 6 (B6) – brick built, flat roofed electricity substation;
- Building 7 (B7) – one storey brick building with pitched roof contemporary with