

14th July 2021

Ecological Walkover Survey of Proposed Cycleway Connection and Pedestrian Access at Butt Batch, Wrington, North Somerset

This site note has been produced by Ethos Environmental Planning (Ethos) on behalf of the Client and provides details of an ecological walkover survey of the proposed cycleway and pedestrian access (Central Grid Reference ST 78196 62041), hereafter referred to as the 'the site'. Ethos was commissioned to undertake an ecological walkover survey in order to identify any ecological constraints to the proposed works.

1.1 Proposed Works

The proposed cycleway connection is off Westward Close to connect to the lane to the north of Westward Close. The works will entail minor alterations to the highway verge and the removal of a 5m section of hedge. The lane either side of the proposed connection off Westward Close will remain in existing condition. To link the cycleway to the footpath under planning application 20/P/2990/OUT, a new 2m footpath with 0.5m verge to either side is proposed. These proposed works are shown in Figure 1 (drawing ref: P19-2039-001).

1.2 Methodology

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) survey was undertaken drawing on guidance provided in the *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit* (JNCC 2010).

A UKHab survey was undertaken on 13th July 2021. The survey incorporated detailed assessment of the land within the development boundary, including a description and mapping of all key features and habitat types. The survey was carried out to identify the range of habitats within the site and the predominant and notable species of flora.

The survey included an assessment of the habitats present on site and their potential to support protected species.

Survey Personnel

The survey was undertaken by Sarah Forsyth MSc BSc (Hons) ACIEEM. Sarah is a principal ecologist at Ethos with over 15 years' experience in environmental planning and ecological management and assessment, both in consultancy and the public sector and also an accredited member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Limitations

The habitat survey was undertaken within of the optimum survey period for identifying botanical species (March to October inclusive).

1.3 Habitat Survey

Non-native hedgerow

The hedge bordering the north of Westward Close is a non-native with woolly cotoneaster *Cotoneaster tomentosus*, common lilac *Syringa vulgaris* and winter jasmine *Jasminum nudiflorum*. The hedge is bound by hard standing to the south (Westward Close) and compact unmade ground to the north (existing lane).

The section of hedge proposed to be removed is predominately comprised of winter jasmine.

Bramble scrub with tall herbs

To the west of the residential garden by Westward Close, is bramble scrub with nettle, common mallow, hedge bindweed, false oat grass, scent less mayweed, broad leaved dock, spear thistle, and white clover (*Trifolium spp.*).

Bare ground/hard standing

Westward Close is existing hard standing and the lane to the north of Westward Close is unmade, comprised of bare ground and gravel.

1.4 Assessment and Recommendations

The proposals will require the removal of a 5m section of non-native hedgerow and a less than 50m² area of bramble scrub with tall herbs. The habitats being impacted for the works are of low ecological value.

The section of hedge and area of bramble scrub being removed both have potential to support nesting birds. Precautionary working for vegetation removal is recommended to avoid any potential adverse impact on breeding birds.

Recommendations

To avoid impacts on breeding birds, the vegetation works should be programmed outside of breeding bird season (March to August inclusive). If this cannot be avoided, prior to the clearance of vegetation, a Suitably Qualified Ecologist should check the area to be cleared for the presence of nests. A precautionary method statement for vegetation clearance during breeding bird season is provided in Appendix 1.

To deliver compensation and enhancement of habitat, it is recommended that replacement native hedgerow planting is included to the east of the new footpath layout. As an enhancement the replacement planting is recommended to include a variety of native species that are of value to local wildlife for foraging resources. For example hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), field maple, wild cherry (*Prunus spp*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), and spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), and climbers such as honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and dog rose (*Rosa canina*).



Photo 1. Westward Close



Photo 2. Lane to the north of Westward Close



Photo 3. Non-native hedgerow between Westward Close and the existing lane



Photo 4. 5m section of non-native hedgerow to be removed for cycleway link (view from Westward Close)



Photo 5. 5m section of non-native hedgerow to be removed for cycleway link (view from existing lane)



Photo 6. Bramble scrub with tall herbs (nettle)

1.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, provided the recommendations for precautionary mitigation and replacement native hedge planting is implemented, it is considered that there will be no adverse impact to protected species and that there will be no net loss in biodiversity at the site.

Appendix 1

Vegetation Clearance Precautionary Working Method Statement

Timing

Works are to be programmed outside of breeding bird season - September to February. If works are programmed to be undertaken during breeding bird season (March to August inclusive), this precautionary method statement will be followed.

Pre- Vegetation Clearance

- A toolbox talk will be provided to inform site staff of the potential presence of nesting birds.
- A pre-works check of the hedgerow and scrub habitat to be cleared will be carried out by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) prior to any vegetation clearance.
- If any nesting birds are found during the clearance, works will stop immediately and the SQE informed. A non-working area will be marked out by the SQE. Vegetation clearance within this demarcation will not be permitted until it is confirmed by the SQE that the chicks are fully fledged. Any changes in working method are to be informed with advice from the SQE.

Legislation

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and cannot be killed or taken, their nests and eggs taken, damaged or destroyed while their nest is in use or being built. It also prohibits or controls certain methods of killing or taking except under licence. Other activities that are prohibited include possession and sale. Activities such as killing or taking birds (including relocating) which would otherwise be illegal can be carried out under licence where there is suitable justification, and the issue cannot be resolved by alternative means.

Specially protected or Schedule 1 birds receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Part I birds are protected at all times, Part II during the close season only. In addition to the protection from killing or taking that all birds, their nests and eggs have under the Act, Schedule 1 birds and their young must not be disturbed at the nest.