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Ecological Headlines: Summary

Technical Note

Project:	BMD.19.016	**Ref**:	BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.804.EcoHeadlines-Summary
Subject:	Ecological headlines - summary	**Date:**	30th April 2019
Status:	FOR INFORMATION	**Rev:**	-

Originated
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BACKGROUND

Client.....	AVDC
Consultant.....	Bradley Murphy Design Ltd.
SITE	
Location	Three allocation sites – Shenley Park, Salden Chase Extension & Eaton Leys.
DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING BACKGROUND	
Proposed works	The Sites are being promoted as housing allocation sites for the local plan that could accommodate a large scale, multi-use development, including residential, infrastructure and open space.
Planning stage.....	Local Plan Allocation Site – proposed.
ASSESSMENT	
Date	30th April 2019
Assessor	James Patmore BSc (Hons) CEcol CEnv MCIEEM
Data sources	Site visit. *MAGIC*. Natural England and DEFRA Open Source Data. The Draft Natural England Open Mosaic Habitat Database. The Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory. Readily available maps and imagery.

This Technical Note has been produced to summarise the ecological headlines of a desk-based assessment with the principle purpose of identifying potential constraints and opportunities and what further survey work would be necessary to inform a planning application. The desk studies have been supplemented by a Site visit, restricted to public rights of way.

The detailed assessments for each Site are reported in separate reports -

- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.803.EcoHeadlines_Shenley Park
- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.802.EcoHeadlines_Salden Chase Extension
- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.801.EcoHeadlines_Eaton Leys

Declaration of compliance with professional code of ethics or conduct
The information which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bonafide opinions.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to comply with the relevant best practice guidelines and BS42020:2013 (Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development).

1.1 The Sites

The three potential sites have been assessed with regard to ecological issues associated with potential development in stand-alone documents as set out in –

- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.803.EcoHeadlines_Shenley Park
- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.802.EcoHeadlines_Salden Chase Extension
- BMD.19.016.RPE-TN.801.EcoHeadlines_Eaton Leys

1.2 Summary

With regard to the most suitable location for development in an ecological context the sites generally have similar issues associated with key ecological receptors which could be mitigated through standard approaches.

None of the sites have a direct impact on statutory designated sites and the majority have only small areas of notable habitat within or adjacent to the site boundary. The majority of habitat loss would be associated with loss of arable and grazed pastures with some severance of hedgerow networks. It is considered that existing watercourses would be retained and buffered as per standard approach and key assets such as mature trees, some hedgerow sections, ponds and small woodland blocks would be retained and buffered as part of the wider green infrastructure design for the Site.

With regard to which of the sites could accommodate the allocation proposed with minimised impact to ecological assets, Shenley Park would appear to be more appropriate compared to the Salden Chase Extension and Eaton Leys. The Shenley Park site is situated adjacent to existing development and supports large field parcel features that could accommodate larger blocks of development with minimised hedgerow severance (compared to Salden Extension which has a number of smaller field parcels and hedgerow linkages within it). The more sensitive habitat to the north and south/south-east could be adequately buffered and habitat creation in these areas could minimise impacts on known great crested newt populations in close proximity to the Site. Suitably designed and located green space could also extend and buffer the Tattenhoe Park area and also extend the semi-mature woodland area situated along the eastern boundary of the northern portion of the Site. The hedge and tree feature and small plantation along Shenley Road could also be retained and incorporated into the greenspace design for the Site.

Although adequate mitigation could be implemented at Eaton Leys and Salden Chase Extension, the ecological impacts are considered likely to be more severe due to the likely impact on a more complex hedgerow network, ponds and areas of rough grass/scrub at Salden Chase Extension and the close proximity to the River Ouzel corridor at Eaton Leys.

Table 1.1 below summaries the key issues relevant to each Site.

Table 1.1 Summary of ecological considerations across all 3 sites

Ecological consideration	Shenley park	Salden Chase Extension	Eaton Leys
Sites			
Statutory protected sites – direct impact	None	None	None
Statutory protected sites – indirect impact	Within impact risk zone which may have some relevance to the development type in terms of water discharge.	Within impact risk zone but not relevant to development type.	Within impact risk zone but not relevant to development type.
Habitats			
Priority habitats	Small areas of deciduous woodland habitat listed on *MAGIC* on Site. Hedgerow network likely to qualify.	None listed within the Site on *MAGIC.* Hedgerows present within the Site and are likely to qualify as Priority Habitat with a smaller field arrangement with more hedgerows. Three ponds on Site may qualify as Priority habitat.	None listed within the Site on *MAGIC.* Hedgerow network likely to qualify. Three ponds on Site may qualify as Priority habitat.
Ancient woodland	None on Site Adjacent to northern Site boundary and within 15 m of southern Site boundary (separated from Site by A-road).	None on Site. Site lies adjacent to large block of ancient replanted woodland to the north-west.	None on Site or adjacent.
Ancient/veteran trees	None included within Woodland Trust Inventory. Some mature trees within hedges and on woodland edge.	None included within Woodland Trust Inventory.	None included within Woodland Trust Inventory.
Other notable habitats	Arable margins (generally limited). Watercourse. Tree-lined hedgerows	Area of semi-improved grassland with scattered scrub in the south-western corner. The public right of way bisecting the Site in the south also supports a mature hedge and tree feature.	The boundary and edge features such as riparian corridor along River Ouzel and rough grasslands at field boundaries.
Species: Mammals			
Badger	Some potential on site with potential evidence of badger in the south of Site.	Some potential.	Some potential.
Bats	Commuting and foraging features. Roost features limited to farm buildings and occasional mature trees	Commuting and foraging features. Roost features limited to occasional mature trees	Commuting and foraging features. Roost features limited to farm buildings and occasional mature trees. River Ouzel may be a significant bat foraging corridor.

Ecological consideration	Shenley park	Salden Chase Extension	Eaton Leys
Dormouse	Suitable habitat restricted to hedgerow networks and small woodland parcels. Unlikely to occur on Site, more likely in adjacent woodland blocks.	The Site contains a network of hedgerows and lies adjacent to area of ancient woodland >20 ha in size and as such some potential for mature hedgerows to support dormouse.	Suitable habitat on Site restricted to the hedgerow network but generally these are isolated. Unlikely to occur on Site, more likely in adjacent woodland blocks.
Other notable mammals	Brown hare Hedgehog	Brown hare Hedgehog	Brown hare Hedgehog
Otter	Watercourse on Site have some suitability for otter but were generally narrow stream corridors.	Watercourse bisecting northern portion of the Site may provide foraging and commuting habitat for otter.	Limited on Site. The river corridor forming the western boundary of the Site is suitable for otter. Otter are known to make use of the River Ouzel within the Milton Keynes area.
Water vole	Watercourse on Site and adjacent watercourses have some suitability for water vole. The watercourse on Site was narrow and had limited marginal vegetation due to shading from nearby scrub.	The watercourse bisecting the Site and nearby ditches may provide suitable habitats. However, given the heavily over-shaded nature of the on-Site watercourse, it is unlikely to be of high suitability.	The ditches and pond within the Site afford only limited suitability for water vole due to isolation within large areas of arable and grazing fields.
Species: Amphibians and reptiles			
Great crested newt	No ponds on Site but ponds are present immediately adjacent to the Site within Woodpond Farm to the south-west and woodlands to the south-east of the Site so areas of terrestrial habitat used by great crested newt could be situated within the Site.	No records for the Site. Site contains three ponds associated with hedgerows and lies within 250 m of a further five as indicated by OS mapping which could provide suitable breeding conditions for great crested newt.	Three ponds are present within the Site as indicated by OS mapping which could provide suitable breeding conditions for great crested newt.
Reptiles	Generally, the Site lacks areas of habitat suitable for reptile species due to dominance of agricultural fields. Areas of suitable habitat will likely to be limited to field boundaries and the riparian corridor.	Generally, the Site lacks areas of habitat suitable for reptile species due to dominance of agricultural fields. Areas of suitable habitat are limited to the watercourse corridor, edge of the woodland to the north, rough edges against hedgerows and an area of semi-improved grassland with scattered scrub. Ponds and watercourse features could be suitable for grass snake.	Generally, the Site lacks areas of habitat suitable for reptile species due to dominance of agricultural fields. Areas of suitable habitat will likely be limited to field boundaries and the riparian corridor along the western Site boundary and pond features (e.g. grass snake).
Other amphibians	Ponds in immediate vicinity to the Site may support habitat for species such as smooth newt,	Ponds may support habitat for species such as common frog and common toad.	Ponds may support habitat for species such as common frog and common toad.

Ecological consideration	Shenley park	Salden Chase Extension	Eaton Leys
	common frog and Priority species such as common toad.		Opportunities to provide new, small pond features for amphibians as part of the final landscape design for an application at the Site.
Species: birds			
Schedule 1	Habitats on Site generally limited but could provide foraging habitat for barn owl.	Habitats on Site generally limited but could provide foraging habitat for barn owl, particularly along southern edge of the Site.	Habitats on Site generally limited but could provide foraging habitat for barn owl
Breeding birds	Nesting habitats are limited to large areas of agricultural field, with small features such as hedges and scattered trees, small woodland blocks and the watercourse. These features are likely to support breeding birds and the farmland areas support ground nesting species such as skylark, particularly the northern arable fields. Adjacent woodland areas support a range of bird species such as willow warbler, black cap, chiffchaff, buzzard, green woodpecker, dunnock, etc.	Nesting habitats on Site are limited to areas of agricultural field, hedgerows and scattered trees. Open grazed grassland areas and arable field could support ground nesting species such as skylark but none recorded during the walkover (limited to public rights of way).	Nesting habitats within the Site are largely limited to areas of agricultural field, hedgerows and scattered trees. These features are likely to support breeding birds and the open areas may support ground nesting species such as skylark. Starlings were recorded around the farm buildings and considered likely breeding in this area.
Wintering birds	The Site habitats are limited to large areas of agricultural fields, small features such as hedges and scattered trees and the watercourse. The Site is unlikely to be of elevated value for wintering birds within the local area with lacking wetland areas on Site. The Site comprises several grassland fields which may be of value to terrestrial wintering birds (such as fieldfare and redwing).	The Site habitats are limited to areas of agricultural fields, small features such as hedges and scattered trees and the watercourse. The Site is unlikely to be of elevated value for wintering birds within the local area with lacking wetland areas on Site. The Site comprises several grassland fields with hedges which may be of value to terrestrial wintering birds (such as fieldfare and redwing).	The Site is unlikely to be of elevated value to wintering birds within the local area as a result of lack of large wetland areas. The Site comprises several grassland fields with hedges which may be of value to terrestrial wintering birds (such as fieldfare and redwing).
Farmland bird assemblages	The site supports species such as skylark, particularly within the northern arable portion of the Site.	There are no arable or grassland farm assemblage of birds on the Site as confirmed by *MAGIC*. During the walkover bird species were limited to scrub and hedgerow species such as chiffchaff, willow warbler, whitethroat, blackcap, dunnock etc.	is no arable farmland bird assemblage on the Site or within 1 km of the Site. A grassland bird assemblage of two species occurs within the Site and within the 0-1 km and 1-2 km radii of the Site. These assemblages include lapwing and yellow

Ecological consideration	Shenley park	Salden Chase Extension	Eaton Leys
		Ground nesting species such as skylark and meadow pipit may utilize the southern arable field and central sheep grazed areas, with only limited suitability in the horse grazed paddocks in the north.	wagtail (both of which overlap with the Site) and grey partridge, tree sparrow and turtle dove (all within the 1-2 km radii of the Site. Generally, it is considered that the Site provides suitable habitats for these species, although these areas are limited in extent and of no elevated quality when compared with those provided by the immediate surrounds
Fish			
Notable fish	The watercourse that runs through the southern portion of the Site is limited in extent and comprise a mixture of shaded and unshaded sections and adjoins a nearby large semi-natural waterbody. As such, the presence of suitable habitat for notable fish such as Bullhead, cannot be ruled out.	The watercourse within the Site appears heavily over-shaded by adjacent trees throughout its onsite length and is therefore unlikely to support populations of notable fish such as Bullhead.	Limited on site due to lack of significant watercourse. Adjacent River Ouzel could support notable fish species.
Invertebrates			
White-clawed crayfish	The watercourse within the Site may have some suitability for white-clawed crayfish but generally appeared limited due to silt and heavy shading.	Watercourses surrounding the Site, particularly to the south could provide opportunities for white-clawed crayfish.	Limited on site due to lack of significant watercourse. Adjacent River Ouzel could support the species.
Other notable invertebrates	The Site is dominated by agricultural land and is therefore unlikely to support any habitats of significantly elevated value. Areas of scrub habitat are present along the eastern boundary of the southern portion of the Site, associated with the managed woodlands of Tattenhoe Park. These areas could support stands of scrub suitable for black hairstreak butterfly and other notable butterfly/moth species.	The Site is dominated by intensively grazed fields and is therefore unlikely to support habitats of significantly elevated value for invertebrates within the context of the local area. Hedgerows and scrub edges of the Site may support features suitable for notable species such as black hairstreak butterfly.	Site is dominated by agricultural land and is therefore unlikely to support any habitats of significantly elevated value for invertebrates when compared with the local area.