

Lidl Great Britain limited – Lidl Stoneham Lane – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal / Walkover

Ecology and Biodiversity Note

RPS were commissioned by Lidl Great Britain Limited to undertake an ecological survey / walkover of the proposed application site, off Stoneham Lane, Eastleigh, Hampshire. The survey is to inform a planning application for the construction of a new Lidl discount foodstore and associated works including hard and soft landscaping.

The site was previously subject to a suite of ecological surveys to inform the much larger outline development (O/15/76023), where dominating habitats included improved grassland playing fields, with little ecological interest (WYG, 2015).

A population of grass snakes were present in the field margins and were subject to a suitable mitigation / translocation strategy, as part of the wider development proposals (WYG, 2015); and all suitable dormouse habitat was cleared under a European Protected Species Licence (ESPL), as a dormouse population was noted to be present.

During the construction of the residential development, it is assumed (due to the current state of the site) that this particular parcel was used as a construction compound, with any vegetation cleared in accordance with the approved mitigation documents and licences.

Methodology

Desk Study

Locations of statutory designated sites were accessed via the government 'MAGIC' website (MagicMap, 2022).

Due to the small scale of the site, the nature of the development and the existing, low-quality habitats, a full data search from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) was not considered to be necessary.

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The Ecological Appraisal consisted of two components: a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and a scoping survey for protected species and other species of conservation concern which could present a constraint to development.

The survey took place on the 3rd May 2022, by a suitably qualified RPS Ecologist, Hannah Knight MSc MCIEEM.

The Phase 1 Habitat surveys followed the standard methodology (JNCC, 2010), and as described in the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment (IEEM, 2012). In summary, this comprised walking over the survey area and recording the habitat types and species that were present.

A protected species scoping survey was carried out in conjunction with the Phase 1 Habitat survey. The site was assessed for its suitability to support protected species, in particular great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, reptiles, birds, badgers *Meles meles*, bats, and other species of conservation importance that could pose a planning constraint.

The surveyor looked for evidence of use including signs such as burrows, droppings, footprints, paths, hairs, refugia and particular habitat types known to be used by certain groups such as ponds. Any mammal paths were also noted down and where possible followed. Fence boundaries were walked to establish any entry points or animal's signs such as latrines. Areas of bare earth were inspected for mammal prints. Areas of habitat considered suitable for protected species or those of conservation interest were recorded.

Results

Desk Study

There are two statutory designated sites within 2 km of the application boundary, the River Itchen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Both are located circa 1.8 km south-east of the application site and are illustrated in Figure 1.

This site is designated for comprising a classic chalk stream and river, fen meadow, flood pasture and swamp habitats, particularly formations of in-channel vegetation dominated by water crowfoot *Ranunculus spp*, riparian vegetation communities (including wet woodlands) and side channels, runnels and ditches associated with the main river and former water meadows. The site is also notified for significant populations of the nationally rare southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale* and assemblages of nationally-rare and scarce freshwater and riparian invertebrates.

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site was largely comprised of bare ground / gravel hardstanding with scattered areas of occasional ruderal vegetation, including common nettles *Urtica dioica*, broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne* and cleavers *Galium aparine*. A single pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* tree was present, in the north-western corner of the site (Figure 2).

Various scattered construction materials (heras fencing, a skip etc), were located within the site.

Protected Species Scoping

The site was devoid of any ecological interest, comprising solely of hardstanding / bare ground with occasional ruderal vegetation and a single tree.

The single oak tree could offer suitable habitat for common species of nesting birds, although it did not offer any suitable features for roosting bats.

No other protected species were considered to be present (or likely to be present) on the site.

Recommendations

Breeding birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take the birds or their eggs, or to intentionally destroy or disturb a nest, when it is in use or being built.

In order to protect bird nests and comply with the law protecting them, any vegetation removal should take place outside of the breeding bird season, which is generally considered to be from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, prior to removal, such vegetation should first be checked for the presence of nesting birds by an experienced ecologist. If any nests are found, they will be left undisturbed until the chicks had fledged (usually around six weeks).

Enhancements

Although the Environment Bill 2021 has recently been passed; at present this is not yet required for new applications, unless the requirement for such is embedded in local policy. This position was backed up by a recent appeal in Wiltshire (reference number APP/Y3940/ W/21/3282365) where the Inspector found that whilst the Environment Act has been enacted, the relevant provisions haven't and there's no requirement for 10% BNG in the NPPF. Therefore, more weight should be given to the relevant local plan.

Based on the above, as there are no local policies which require development in Eastleigh (or Hampshire), to provide a biodiversity net gain, it is not considered necessary to submit such information.

Our ref: ECO02545_871 – Lidl Stoneham Lane

Whilst there is not a requirement to submit information relating to biodiversity net gain, the measures set out below are to be adopted on site post development, it is not considered unreasonable to assume the ecological value of the site will be improved.

The scheme will include a native-led landscaping strategy, with areas of wildflower meadow, significant new native tree planting, native hedgerows and an amenity grassland mix. All of this will provide habitat for species within the local area, including invertebrates, birds and bats.

In addition, it is recommended that a series of both bird and bat boxes be included in the scheme, two of each; attached to the exterior of the newly constructed building; facing areas of open space, where possible. Bat and bird boxes will include a combination of the following:

- Schwegler 2FN;
- Schwegler 2FF.
- Schwegler box 1B; and
- Schwegler box 2GR.

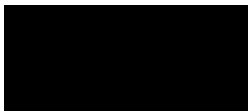
The above bird and bat boxes should be sited in consultation with an ecologist.

Conclusions

Considering all of the above, the site is deemed to be of low ecological value. Recommendations have been made to protect any populations of nesting birds, and enhancements have been proposed to ensure that the site delivers biodiversity gains.

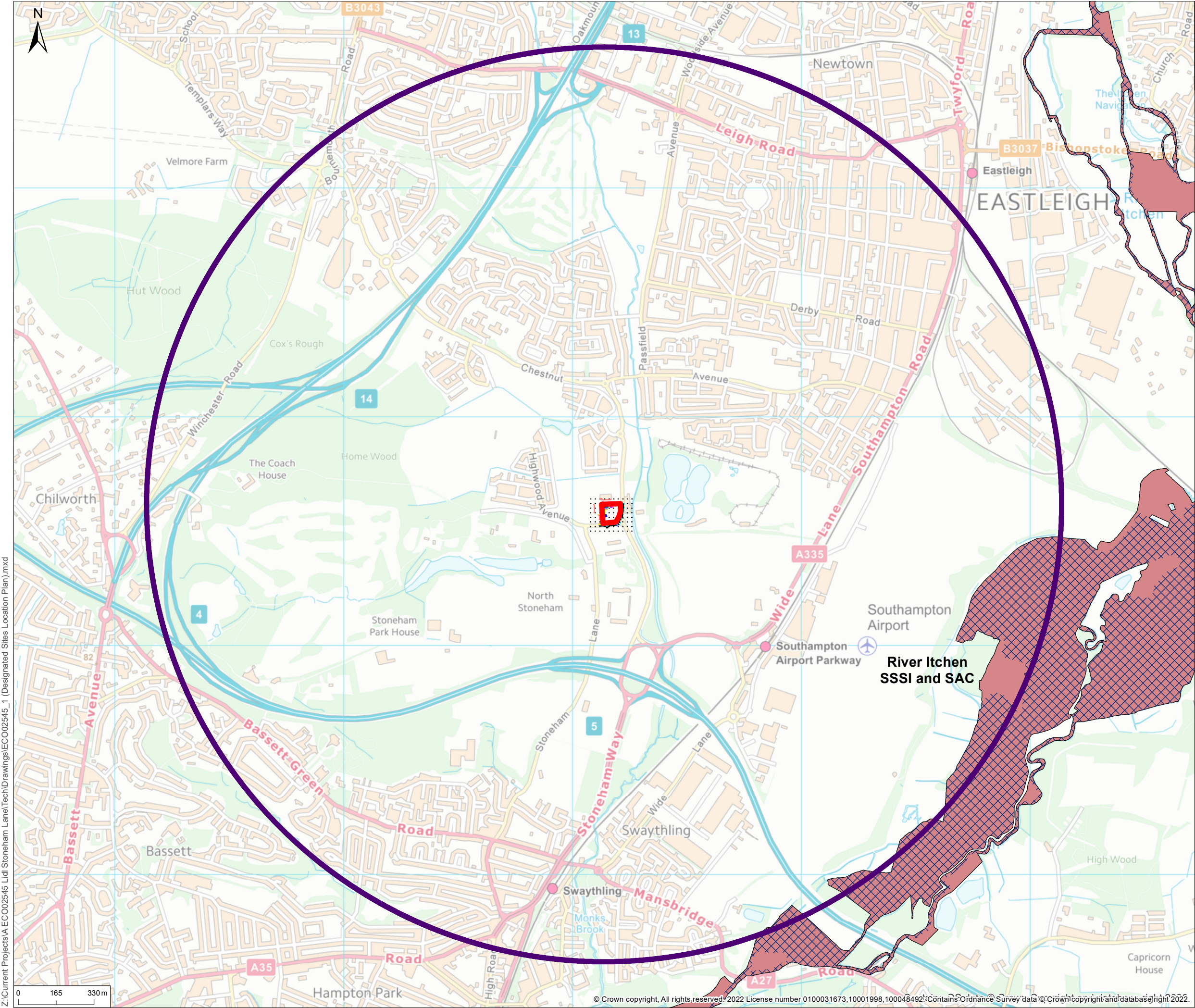
Do let me know if you need anything further.

Yours sincerely,
for RPS Consulting Services Ltd



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Figure 1 – Designated Sites Location Plan



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Notes

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- Legend**
- Application boundary
 - 2 km radius from application site

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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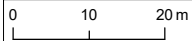
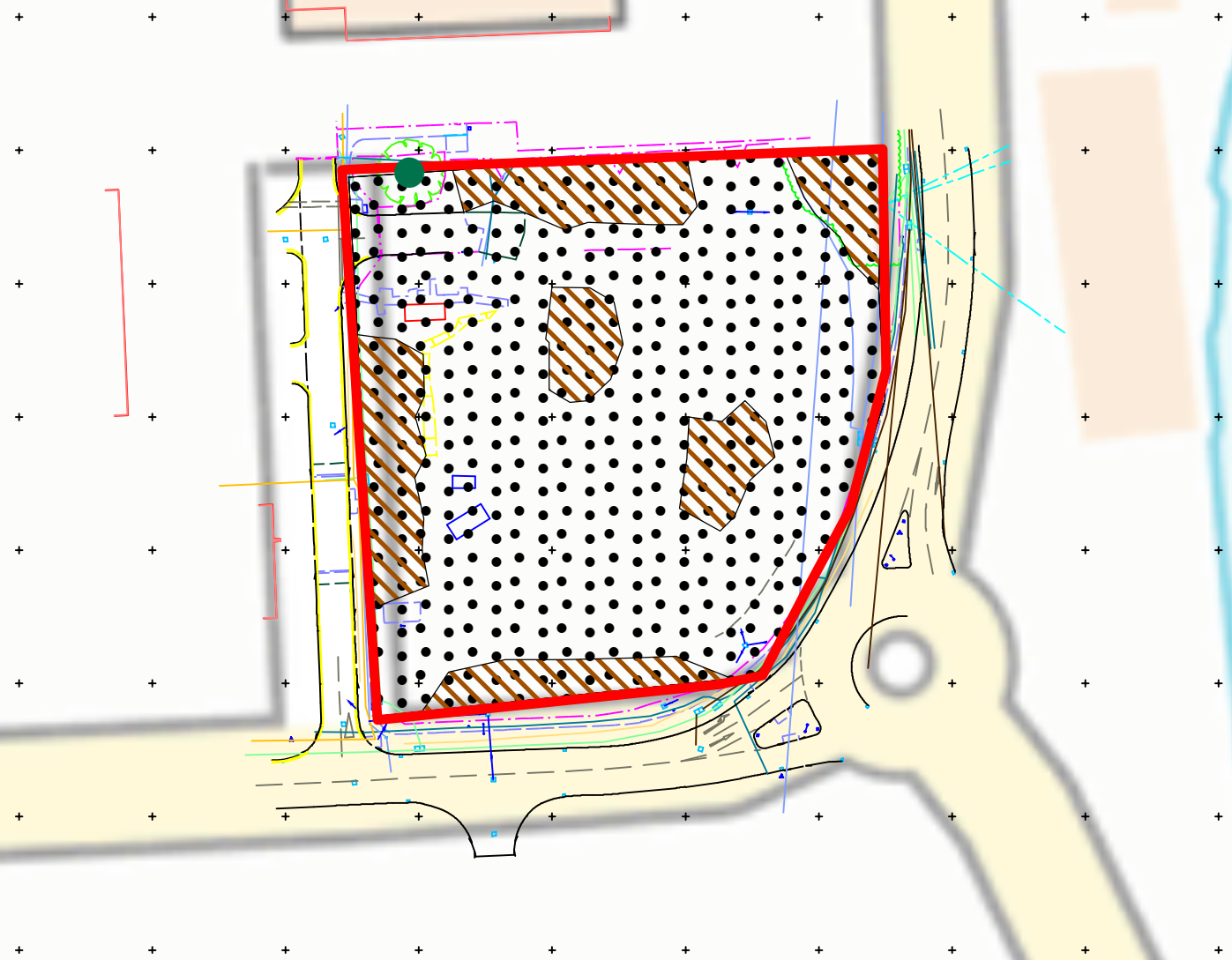
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Project	Lidl Stoneham Way, Eastleigh		
Title	Designated Sites Location Plan		
Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By	
DRAFT	HK	HK	
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created	
ECO02545	1:15,873	MAY 2022	
Figure Number			Rev
1			-

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Figure 2 – Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan



Education
Facility



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Legend

Application boundary

Phase 1 habitat - polygon features

Habitat_code

Bare ground

Tall ruderal

Scattered trees

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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Client	Lidl Great Britain Limited		
Project	Lidl Stoneham Way, Eastleigh		
Title	Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map		
Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By	
DRAFT	HK	HK	
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created	
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Figure Number	Rev		
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