



Hampshire
County Council

Ecological Desk-Based Assessment

Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters,
Eastleigh

For
Hampshire County Council
Property Services

August 2022
Updated November 2022

Hampshire County Council Ecology Team

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Report conditions

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Summary

Hampshire County Council Property Services propose the construction of a two-storey modular office / lab building at Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters, Eastleigh.

An ecological desk-based assessment was conducted to inform proposals for the site. This report updates an assessment previously produced by the HCC Ecology Team in May 2020 and responds to the slightly updated plans now proposed. This included analysis of aerial imagery of the site and a search for designated sites and protected species within a 1km radius in addition to reviewing recent site photographs.

There are no designated sites within the project site, and five locally designated sites within the 1km search radius; these are all Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Ten parcels of woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory are also located within the search radius. Habitats within the project site appear to be primarily man-made structures, hardstanding, and a small area of regularly mown amenity grass.

No records of protected species were returned within the site boundary. Reptiles are known to be present in the wider landscape and a small population was recently identified elsewhere on the wider HFRS site during surveys carried out by a third party.

A small number of records were returned for other protected and notable species including Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, Otter *Lutra lutra*, Water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, birds, invertebrates, and plants, within the wider 1 km search radius.

The buildings and structures currently within the project site are considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats. The hardstanding and amenity grass is of negligible ecological value at site level and are unlikely to support notable species.

The development has a slight risk of accidentally damaging reptile habitat and harming reptiles in the adjacent land to the south of the redline boundary. Measures are set out that would ensure such impacts are avoided.

No further survey / assessment work is recommended.

November 2022 Update:

- Paragraph 1.2 – Site description amended

- Paragraph 3.11 onwards – added further information regarding reptile data, erroneously missed during previous version.
- Paragraph 4.17 onwards – added further commentary on potential reptile impacts.
- Paragraph 5.5 onwards – added further information regarding avoidance measures for reptiles.
- Conclusions – amended to include reptiles

1. Introduction

Objectives

- 1.1. Hampshire County Council Ecology Team (HCCET) has been commissioned by HCC Property Services to undertake an ecological desk-based assessment in relation to proposals to construct a two-storey modular office / laboratory building at Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters, Eastleigh. Existing and proposed plans are shown in **Figure A1.1** of **Appendix 1**.

Site Description

- 1.2. Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters are located on Leigh Road in Eastleigh (central Grid Reference SU4426 1965). The project site is used as a live-fire training centre and is located within the Headquarters' grounds, covering an area of approximately 0.2ha in the northwest part of the wider site. Structures within the project site include metal container units, a crane training tower and platform, and a two-storey modular building, primarily surrounded by hardstanding but with a small area of amenity grass to the south-east within the redline boundary. Photos of the site provided by HCC Property Services are shown in **Table 4.1** at **Appendix 4**.
- 1.3. The project site is bound by treelines on its north and west sides, by an area of hardstanding to its east, and by amenity grass with scattered trees and scrub to the south.
- 1.4. The mainline railway from Eastleigh Station is contiguous with the site's northern boundary, beyond which land use is primarily industrial and business parks. Land use to the east of the site is primarily residential, and to the south, Fleming Park provides a large area of greenspace through which flows Monks Brook. The landscape to the west is dominated by the M3, which lies approximately 140m from the site.

Limitations

- 1.5. A site visit has not been conducted to inform this ecological desk-based assessment and recommendations made are dependent upon the data and imagery available to HCCET as well as any likely project impacts.

2. Methods

Desk-based assessment

- 2.1. An ecological desk-based assessment was conducted by HCCET on 27 July 2022. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping was used to identify all records of protected species and habitats within a 1km radius of the site. Given the localised nature of the proposals this search radius was considered sufficient for assessing risk to all ecological features. In addition, records were obtained of all statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites within the search radius.
- 2.2. Existing recent photos of the site held by Property Services were available and used to make initial assessments of the site in lieu of a site visit.
- 2.3. HCCET had full access to the extensive biological database held by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC). The data is aggregated to meet the HBIC Data Users Agreement and attention is drawn to paragraph 5 of the agreement which states: *‘Whilst every reasonable effort is made to validate information supplied to and by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, owing to the dynamic and judgmental nature of information relating to wildlife, HBIC disclaims any responsibility for the accuracy or comprehensiveness of the information supplied, and accepts no liability for any indirect, consequential, or incidental damages or losses arising from use of the information’.*

3. Results

Desk-based assessment

Designated sites

- 3.1. There are no nationally designated sites and five locally designated sites, all of which are Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), within the 1km search radius.
- 3.2. The closest designated site is Monks Brook SINC, which lies approximately 360m south of the project site. The SINC has remnants of ancient woodland vegetation surrounding the brook including ancient woodland indicator species Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*.
- 3.3. There are four further SINCs within the 1km search radius, lying between approximately 450m and 540m of the project site. These are Northend Copse SINC, Boyatt Wood (Wood Avenue Extension) SINC, Woodland between railway & Monks Brook SINC, and Boyatt Wood SINC.
- 3.4. Further details of the designated sites within the search radius, including a map showing their locations, are shown in **Table A3.1** and **Figure A3.1** at **Appendix 3**.

Priority Habitats

- 3.5. There are no Priority Habitats within the project site boundary nor within the Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters grounds. Priority Habitat types within the 1km search radius include lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. The closest Priority Habitat to the site is a narrow strip of lowland mixed deciduous woodland covering located approximately 15m north of the site. This extends to the east for approximately 80m and to the west for approximately 200m, where passes beneath the M3 beyond which it extends north for approximately 600m as well as continuing west for approximately 1km.
- 3.6. There are several sites within the 1km search radius that are listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The closest of these lies approximately 500m northeast of the site.

- 3.7. A map showing the location of nearby Priority Habitats is shown in **Figure A3.1** at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.8. A review of aerial imagery of the project site indicates that habitats within it include a building and other man-made, areas of hardstanding, amenity grassland, and scrub. Deciduous trees and scrub run along the north and west site boundaries.
- 3.9. The environment surrounding the site is dominated by urban development including commercial, industrial, residential land use. Ecological connectivity between the site and the rural landscape beyond Eastleigh and its suburbs is interrupted to the north by the mainline railway contiguous with the site's northern boundary, to the west by the M3 and to the east and south by other transport routes and urban development.

Protected and notable species

- 3.10. A review of the biological database held by HBIC identified no records for protected and notable species within the project site although records were returned for such species within the 1km search area. Relevant records are shown in **Table A3.2** at **Appendix 3**. (NB – Table A3.2 only includes records held by HBIC; it does not include any records from surveys, such as the survey of the nearby area of the wider FRS site, where those records have yet to be formally submitted, verified, and added to the HBIC database)
- 3.11. The most notable nearby records in terms of potential impacts to the project are the large numbers of reptile records returned from recent development sites to the north of the railway line that forms the northern boundary of the site. Railway lines and associated trackside vegetation can be important habitat features for reptiles, providing both refuge and foraging opportunities as well as population dispersal routes.
- 3.12. It is understood that a recent planning application for another area of the wider site identified a small number of slow worms on an area of rougher grassland.
- 3.13. The closest bat record was for a Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* recorded 200m southeast of the site in 2018.

4. Potential ecological constraints

Designated sites

- 4.1. The closest designated site to the Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters is Monks Brook SINC, which lies 360m south of the site. Habitats present within Monks Brook SINC are absent from the project site and the two are not ecologically connected. Other designated sites, and additional sites included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory, located within the 1km search radius are between 450m and 540m away from the project site, and none are ecologically connected to it.
- 4.2. It is considered that the proposed works will have no adverse impacts on nearby designated or ancient woodland sites.

Habitats/Vegetation

- 4.3. Habitats identified within the project site include hardstanding, amenity grassland and small patches of ruderal vegetation and scrub; these habitats are of low ecological value. It is considered that their removal will not be an ecological constraint upon the development proposals.
- 4.4. A narrow strip of Priority Habitat type lowland mixed deciduous woodland lies approximately 15m north of the site. It is understood that the development proposals will not impact upon this area of Priority Habitat.

Protected Species

Bats

- 4.5. There were no records returned within the project site and two within the 1km search radius. The closest record was for a Common Pipistrelle recorded 200m southeast of the site in 2018.
- 4.6. The building on site is of simple modular construction, with prefabricated metal-clad walls and a flat roof. The building has no roof voids, its construction materials offer no opportunities for bats to grip, and there appear to be no crevices or other potential features suitable to support roosting bats. It is considered that the building offers negligible bat roost suitability.

- 4.7. Other built structures within the site, metal containers used for live fire training purposes, are also of metal construction with no potential roosting features. These structures are regularly filled with fire and smoke, making it highly unlikely that they would be used by any species.
- 4.8. Vegetated areas within the site are limited to small patches of amenity grass and scrub which, due to their size and lack of ecological connectivity, offer negligible value as bat foraging or commuting resources.
- 4.9. The strip of woodland that borders the site to the north may offer suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats as it is ecologically connected to areas of woodland to the east (ecological connectivity to the west is constrained by the M3). These woodlands are not to be impacted by the development proposals.
- 4.10. Bats are not considered to be a potential constraint on the development proposals.

Other Mammals

- 4.11. Records returned for Otter *Lutra lutra* and Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* within the search radius are mostly associated with Monks Brook SINC. The site lacks habitats such as rivers, streams, and ditches suitable to support riparian mammals and has no suitable ecological connectivity with Monks Brook SINC.
- 4.12. No records were returned for other mammals, including Badger *Meles meles*, within the site. Within the 1km search area a number of records were returned for European Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, the closest of these being approximately 300m northwest of the site.
- 4.13. Mammals are not considered a potential constraint on the development proposals.

Birds

- 4.14. No records were returned within the site and a number that were returned were for woodland-specialist species, while these may be present in surrounding wooded habitats, they are unlikely to be present within the site itself. Current site operations are likely to be highly disturbing to birds and it is unlikely that any species sensitive to disturbance would be present in nearby surrounding habitat.
- 4.15. Habitats within the site unlikely to support nesting birds and are likely to be of negligible value as a foraging resource.

- 4.16. Nesting birds are therefore not considered a potential constraint on the development proposals.

Amphibians and Reptiles

- 4.17. A small population of slow worm was recorded on the wider site, to the south-west of the application boundary, in an area of rougher grassland. The planning application for this adjacent proposal included a reptile mitigation strategy. There are also records of reptiles to the north of the railway line, and it is likely that the railway line acts as a dispersal corridor through the local landscape, linking to scrubby vegetation along the western boundary of the site and the more extensive grassland of the wider FRS site.
- 4.18. There are patches of scrubby habitat present within the site that may be suitable for reptiles, but these are small in extent and lack of ecological connectivity both within the site and further afield.
- 4.19. The application site itself is separated from suitable reptile habitat along the northern and western boundaries by regularly used extensive concrete and tarmac hardstanding roads and buildings.
- 4.20. The vast majority of the application site is also hardstanding and roads, which is of negligible suitability for supporting reptiles. A small area of regularly mown short amenity grassland is within the south-east corner of the redline boundary. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, below, this offers negligible suitability of supporting reptiles due to the lack of structure to the habitat, regular management, and short sward.



Figure 1 Redline boundary shown around site and location of nearby reptile survey findings (green)



Figure 2 Location of amenity grassland affected by proposals

- 4.21. The redline boundary does not include the area to the south of Wessex House where a small population of reptiles was identified during a previous application.

- 4.22. However, it is recognised that in the absence of any avoidance measures there remains a small risk of accidental damage to the adjacent reptile habitat and consequent harm to reptiles.
- 4.23. The rough grass, scrub, and ruderal vegetation to the north and west of the site are separated from the development footprint by regularly used roads and hardstanding and there are therefore no anticipated impacts to these habitats.

5. Discussion and mitigation measures

Planning policy and legislation

- 5.1. Paragraph 99 of Circular 06/2005 'Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their impact within the Planning System' states that:

“developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development.”

- 5.2. Many species of animal are legally protected under both domestic or international law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)¹ and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017² respectively). Badgers and their setts are protected under the Badgers Act 1992³.
- 5.3. With reference to bats, hazel dormice, and great crested newts, these are European Protected Species (EPS). This legislation makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb them, or to destroy or damage their breeding sites and resting places (even when the animals are not present). For such work to legally proceed, Natural England (the Government's statutory nature conservation agency) will issue a licence for the work to be able to proceed legally, subject to the proposals meeting certain criteria.
- 5.4. The following sections consider the potential impacts on any identified ecological features and whether the proposed development would be in accordance with policy and legislation.
- 5.5. In view of the findings of the desk-based assessment, it is concluded that the proposed development has no reasonable likelihood of adversely affecting designated sites, habitats, or European protected species. However, as highlighted above, there is a minor risk of accidental damage to adjacent reptile habitat and harm to reptiles.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>

Recommendations for further survey work

- 5.6. There is no suitable reptile habitat within the site itself, and the reptile survey work that was carried out to support the adjacent planning application is sufficiently recent for the results to remain robust. It is considered that there is no value to re-eating this survey work at this time.
- 5.7. There is negligible likelihood for the site to support other protected or notable species and therefore no further survey work is recommended.

Avoidance measures

- 5.8. In order to ensure that the development proceeds without harming adjacent reptile habitat and any reptiles present in those areas, the following measures will be implemented:
- Wessex House is a simple modular prefabricated structure installed on concrete hardstanding on. Removal of this will not require large-scale demolition activity. Removal of the structures will take place primarily from the existing hardstanding areas around the site. Occasional contractor access around the rear elevations will be necessary – for example to disconnect services – but no removal of habitat will be undertaken.
 - Once Wessex House has been dismantled and removed, temporary boundary fencing (such as Heras fencing or similar) will be erected around the site boundary to prevent access onto the adjacent reptile habitat. Signs will be affixed to this fencing advising contractors not to access this habitat.
 - When the temporary fencing is removed, any footplates or supports will be carefully lifted and examined before final removal to ensure there are no reptiles beneath them. Any reptiles found during this work would be carefully relocated to adjacent retained suitable habitat.
 - There will be no construction related activity such as parking or storage along the strip of land immediately adjacent to the railway line (i.e. between the northern boundary fence and the access road running along the northern boundary)

Additional recommendations

- 5.9. It is noted that the Reptile Mitigation Strategy for the adjacent development includes habitat enhancements to the small area of amenity grassland. It is outside the scope of this assessment to consider the planning implications of this in detail; however the Local Planning Authority may find it sensible to review this and request a minor update to the reptile mitigation strategy to allow both developments to proceed.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The desk-based assessment indicates that there are no ecologically valuable sites or habitats present within the project site or its nearby surrounding area. It is considered that the project site is of negligible value to protected and notable species, although the wider HFRS site supports a small population of slow worm.
- 6.2. The nearby surrounding area may be of some value to common and widespread species, in particular woodland and garden birds as well as reptiles.
- 6.3. It is not considered that the proposals have any reasonable potential to adversely affect sites, habitats, or species of ecological importance. No further survey or assessment work is currently recommended. However, there remains a small risk of accidental damage to adjacent reptile habitat and any reptiles present in that habitat. Measures are presented that would ensure impacts to reptiles are avoided.
- 6.4. If proposals change significantly from those assessed in this report, it is advised that the Ecology Team is consulted further.
- 6.5. Unless otherwise advised, the findings and recommendations in this report are solely based on the plans and brief provided to HCCET. The results and findings are valid for two years from the date of this desk-based assessment. HCCET should be contacted if this report is to be used after this period to check if any updating work needs to be undertaken.

Appendix 1 – Proposed Plans



Figure A1.1 HFRS Site and Location Plan as Proposed. E05246-HCC-ZZ-DR-B-1500.

Appendix 2 – Site Location and Aerial Photos

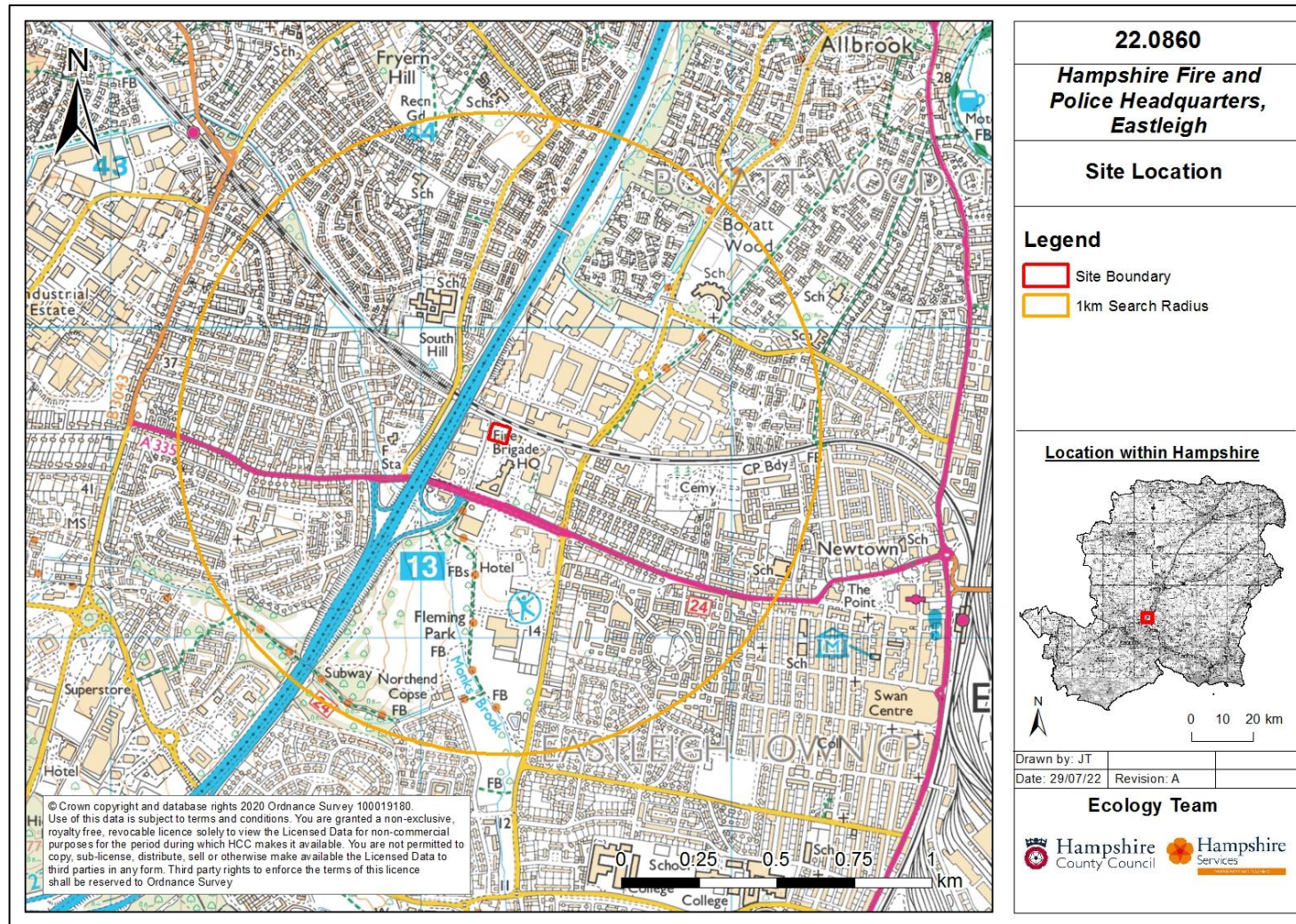


Figure A2.1 Location of site (red line boundary) within wider landscape.

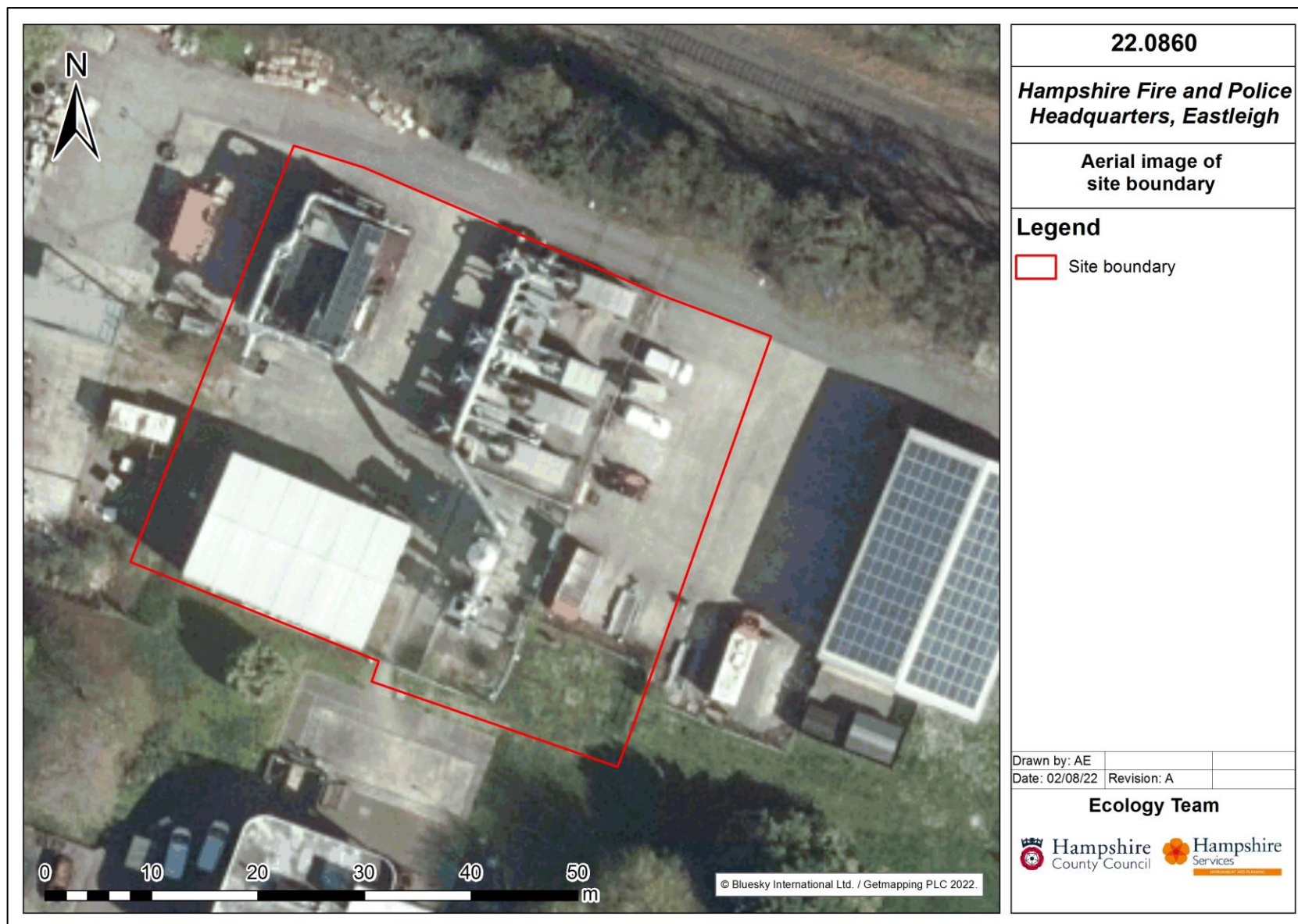


Figure A2.2 Aerial image of site.

Appendix 3 – Desk-based Assessment Findings

Table A3.1 Designated sites within 1km of Hampshire Fire and Police HQ, Eastleigh

Site Name	Reason for Designation	Distance (approx.) and Direction from Site
<i>Locally designated sites</i>		
Monks Brook, Fleming Park SINC	Site designation is primarily for freshwater habitats supporting outstanding assemblages of floating / submerged / emergent plant species, invertebrates, birds, or amphibians. Other qualifying habitats include fens, flushes, seepages, springs, and inundation grasslands; these support a flora and fauna characteristic of unimproved and waterlogged (seasonal or permanent) conditions. The site also supports one or more notable species.	360m S
Northend Copse (East & West of Flyover) SINC	Site designation is primarily for ancient semi-natural woodlands. Additional qualifying habitats include other woodlands in which a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland survives, and areas of woodland comprising important community types such as yew woods and alder swamp wood, that have a restricted distribution in Hampshire.	450m SW
Boyatt Wood – Wood Avenue Extension SINC	Site designation is primarily for ancient semi-natural woodlands. Additional qualifying habitats include other woodlands in which a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland survives, and areas of woodland comprising important community types such as yew woods and alder swamp wood, that have a restricted distribution in Hampshire.	500m NW
Woodland between railway & Monks Brook SINC	Site designation is primarily for ancient semi-natural woodlands. Additional qualifying habitats include other woodlands in which a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland survives, and areas of woodland comprising important community types such as yew woods and alder swamp wood, that have a restricted distribution in Hampshire.	535m NW
Boyatt Wood, Eastleigh SINC	Site designation is primarily for ancient semi-natural woodlands. Additional qualifying habitat includes other woodland in which a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland survives.	540m N

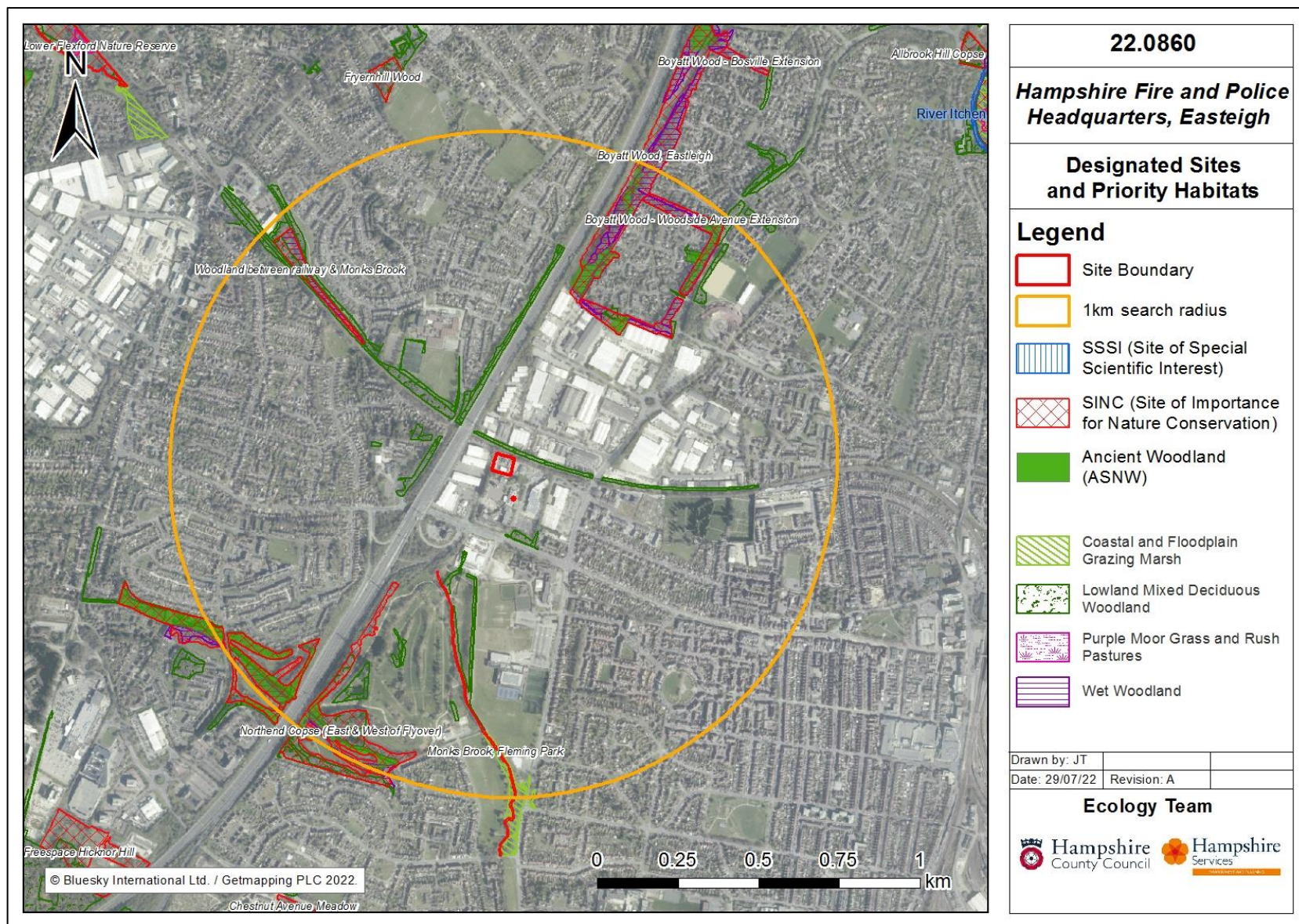


Figure A3.1 Map of nearby designated sites and Priority Habitats and 1km search radius.

Table A3.2 Protected and notable species located within 1km radius of site.

Common name	Taxon name	Details	Distance (approx.) and direction from site
Bats			
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	2018; bat in hand 2015; 2 records	200m SE 550m S
Reptiles			
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	2009; 168 individuals 2009; 495 individuals 2009; 168 individuals 2006 2006; 2 individuals 2007	225m SW 375m SE 500m E 500m SE 650m E 950m NE
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	2006; Field Observation	950m NW
Amphibians			
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	2007; Field Observation	650m W
Mammals (non-bats)			
European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Numerous field observations between 2012 and 2019	Closest: 300m NW Furthest: 1150m SW
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	2016; 5 records including footprints, and fresh, recent, and old spraints.	Closest: 375m W Furthest: 550m S
European Water Vole	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	26 records of either field observations or droppings between 2014 and 2017	Closest = 400m SW
Birds			
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2013	275m NE
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	2013; field record	350m E
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	2017 2013	750m SW 950m NE
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2017	750m SW
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	2017 2019	750m SW 775m NE
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2017 2019	750m SW 775m N
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	2017	750m SW

Common name	Taxon name	Details	Distance (approx.) and direction from site
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	2014	775m NW
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	2018 2015; field record	850m N 1025m W
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2016; field record	950m N
Invertebrates			
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	Numerous records between 2012 and 2019	Closest: 350m S
Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>	2018	700m S
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	2017	700m S
Plants			
Corn Spurrey	<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	2017	275m SE
Weasel's-snout	<i>Misopates orontium</i>	2017; 2 records 2009	275m SE
Yellow-juiced Poppy	<i>Papaver dubium</i> <i>subsp. lecoqii</i>	2015; 2 records	950m SE

Appendix 4 – Site Photos

Table A4.1 Site photos provided by HCC Property Services (July 2022).



Photos 1 Fire training infrastructure, hardstanding, and boundary treeline.



Photo 2 Fire training infrastructure and hardstanding.

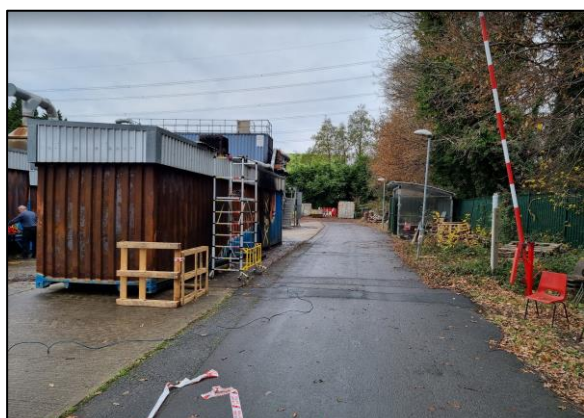


Photo 3 Hardstanding adjacent to treeline along north site boundary.

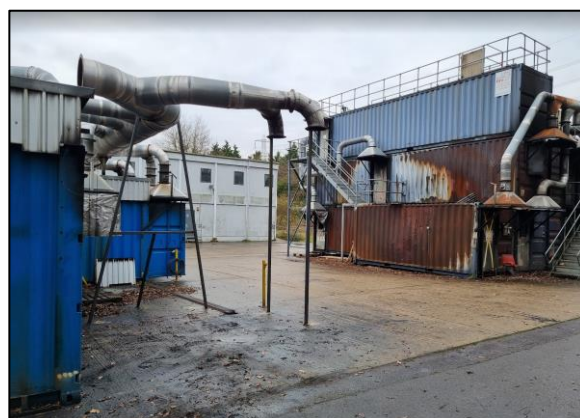


Photo 4 Fire training infrastructure and hardstanding to centre of project site.



Photo 5 Existing two-storey modular building (Wessex House).