

Land at Netley Firs, Kanes Hill, Southampton, SO19 6DX

Invasive Species Management Plan

Prepared on behalf of Hi-Acre Group

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Land at Netley Firs, Kanes Hill

Ecology 9032

Version 01

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Contents

	Page
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2.0 INTRODUCTION	2
PROJECT BACKGROUND	2
BRIEF	2
3.0 SITE INFORMATION	3
4.0 INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL	4
5.0 HABITAT CREATION FOLLOWING REMOVAL	5
6.0 REFERENCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Location of Invasive Species

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The following report provides full details of invasive species management plans and removal for *Rhododendron ponticum* required to discharge Condition 17 of Planning Permission O/18.82750 granted on 17th June 2019 subject to a S106 agreement for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 23 employment units (up to 5,906 sqm of floor space) with units 21-20 for Use Class B1(b) and (c) and units 1-11 and 21-23 for Use Class B2 and associated car parking and access.
- 1.2 During the initial survey work *Rhododendron* was noted within the broadleaved woodland on the site (Pro vision 2017). In addition, a stand of Japanese knotweed is present on the wider land ownership. This method statement relates solely to the current development boundary and not the wider ownership boundary. Specialist advice should be sought for the removal of the Japanese Knotweed on the wider site.
- 1.3 *Rhododendron* is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and requires removal from the site to ensure it does not spread onto neighbouring land. This will also provide ecological enhancements on the site and allow a native understorey to establish in the woodland.
- 1.4 This method statement provides details on removal of the species and subsequent management to ensure the species does not re-establish. The removal works should be conducted by a specialist company and the plan may require minor amendments dependant on site conditions. This management plan provides a broad overview of required works and a detailed plan will be devised by the specialist contractor.

2.0 Introduction

Project Background

- 2.1 The following report provides a method statement for the removal of *Rhododendron ponticum* to fully discharge Planning Condition 17 for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 23 employment units (up to 5,906 sqm of floor space) with units 21-20 for Use Class B1(b) and (c) and units 1-11 and 21-23 for Use Class B2 and associated car parking and access.
- 2.2 During initial survey work of the site stands of *Rhododendron ponticum* were recorded within the boundary woodlands across the site (Pro vision 2017). These areas are shown in **Appendix A**. During an update walkover completed in 2026 the *Rhododendron* was noted as being in the same location through the boundary woodland with no significant changes.
- 2.3 *Rhododendron* is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and requires removal from the site. It is an offence to allow a Schedule 9 species to spread outside of an ownership boundary and therefore to avoid this potential offence the stands will be removed.
- 2.4 The current density of *Rhododendron* is preventing a native understorey from developing and this species has low ecological value and does not provide any foraging opportunities for local invertebrates.
- 2.5 The removal of this species will provide an ecological enhancement and enable the establishment of a native understorey within the woodland areas.

Brief

- 2.6 To prepare an Invasive Species Management Plan in order to discharge Condition 17 of Planning Permission O/18/82750.
- 2.7 Condition 17 states:

No development shall start until a detailed strategy and method statement for the removal of invasive plants has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then accord with the approved method statement.

Reason: To maintain the value of the locality for biodiversity

3.0 Site Information

Current Site Description

- 3.1 The site is located within the eastern suburbs of Southampton. In the wider landscape and to the west lie Netley Common and Dumbleton's Copse, which comprise of large blocks of semi-natural broadleaved woodland (approx. 30ha) which are interspersed with grassland habitats, forest tracks and a small residential estate. Allotment gardens and associated grassland habitats are present in the north, a large residential estate lies to the east and a small holding of residential properties lie to the south of the site which is surrounded by large areas of additional woodland habitats (approx. 7.5ha). The M27 (to the east), Netley Firs Road (to the south) and Kanes Hill Road (to the west) run immediately adjacent to the wooded site boundaries.
- 3.2 A large proportion of the sites woodland and scrub had been cleared, leaving areas of bare ground. A mosaic of tall ruderal and semi-improved grassland habitats is abundant in the northeast and south of the site. Scattered groups of mature/over-mature trees (predominately comprised of pedunculate oak and sweet chestnut) are present in the north and east of the site.

Scheme Description

- 3.3 The development proposals are for the construction of 23 employment units with associated loading and car parking bays at Kanes Hill. The units will be accessed via a new access road leading from Kanes Hill in the west of the site.

4.0 Invasive Species Removal

Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The woodland boundary habitats at Kanes Hill currently have abundant *Rhododendron ponticum* present. This species is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and requires removal from the site.
- 4.2 The *Rhododendron* on the site is currently dominating the understorey of the woodland and preventing a native woodland flora developing. The removal of these stands will provide an opportunity to re-establish a native understorey which will have benefits for the wider biodiversity of the sit.

Removal Method Statement

- 4.3 A specialist company will be employed to remove the *Rhododendron* from the site. A method statement has been provided below which will be amended dependent on the growth forms of the stands that are being removed.
- 4.4 The site comprises medium size stands of *Rhododendron* which are well established. The stands will be removed initially and then controlled. The stands are currently situated within areas of woodland and there is limited access for machinery to flail the *rhododendron* and therefore stands will be removed by chainsaw or hand. The stands will be cut as close to ground level as possible. This work will be conducted outside the breeding bird season (1st March to 31st August) to avoid impacts to nesting birds. The work will be completed before the installation of any bird boxes in the woodland.
- 4.5 The cuttings will be chipped and removed from the site. The removal of above ground vegetation will not stop the growth of *Rhododendron*. The following methods will also be required –
- Digging stumps out – where possible all viable roots will be removed. Care will be taken to ensure there is no damage to retained trees within the wood and may not be possible for all stumps.
 - Direct stump treatments – stumps will be treated with herbicide immediately after being cut. This will be applied with a handheld applicator to avoid damaging retained woodland plants. Stem injection is an alternative method using a drill and drop methodology.

On-Going Management

- 4.6 Once the current stands of *Rhododendron* have been removed it will be important to monitor the site and ensure no re-growth occurs. The re-growth can occur from seeds currently left on site or seeds entering the site from neighboring areas.
- 4.7 Part of the management of the site will include conducting a walk over to record any areas of new *rhododendron* growth. Where *rhododendron* is starting to grow again the saplings should be treated with an approved herbicide before they reach a height of 1.3 meters. After this height the plant will produce flowers and seeds and will proliferate across the site.

5.0 Habitat Creation Following Removal

- 5.1 Following the successful removal of the Rhododendron from the site the native understory should be encouraged to grow back. Natural regeneration following Rhododendron removal can take several years and therefore planting should be incorporated.
- 5.2 Areas of woodland that have been cleared of rhododendron will be planted with hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Following the removal of the rhododendron the top layer of topsoil should be removed; this layer will contain a lot of leaf litter from the removed rhododendron and will hinder the growth of new planting if left.
- 5.3 The removal of this top layer will provide better soil and growing conditions for the native species. The ground can then also be sown with a woodland wildflower mix to aid in the re-establishment of the ground flora.
- 5.4 This native understory mix will provide more foraging opportunities for invertebrates which will in turn enhance the site for birds and small mammals, including bats.

6.0 References & Bibliography

Edwards C. (2006) Managing and controlling invasive rhododendron, Forestry Commission Practice Guide

Pro vision (2017) Land at Netley Firs, Kanes Hill, Southampton, SO19 6DX, Phase I Ecological Assessment

Appendices

Appendix A: Areas with Rhododendron



