

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



**Well House Farm,
Rudyard Road,
Biddulph Moor,
Staffordshire,
ST8 7JW**

0. Summary

This report has been prepared at the request of Mrs Pauline Dishman on behalf of the proprietors of Well House Farm. It relates to the proposed development works at Well House Farm, Rudyard Road, Biddulph Moor, Staffordshire, ST8 7JW. This survey involved both a desktop study and field survey being undertaken.

The current proposals are for a part of the site to be developed into a ménage. These works will result in both the permanent and temporary loss and/or alteration of some of the habitats located on the proposed re-development site. The preliminary ecological appraisal survey revealed one main habitat on site. The phase 1 habitat map, habitat codes and target notes for the site are as follows. The following habitats were recorded on site (in habitat code order): A1, B4, G1, J1.2 & J3.

No designated sites that were revealed by the ecological data search provided by SER fell on the proposed re-development site itself. Therefore, the proposed re-development will have no impact upon any local designated sites as the works are due to remain within the site boundary. No habitats of conservation concern were located on the site itself. Therefore, the proposed scheme of works will not impact upon any rare or valuable habitats.

1.1 Report rationale

This report has been prepared at the request of Mrs. Pauline Dishman on behalf of the proprietors. It relates to the proposed redevelopment works at Well House Farm, Rudyard Road, Biddulph Moor, Staffordshire, ST8 7JW. This survey effort involved both a desktop study and field survey being undertaken.

The main purpose of this assessment was to identify the broad habitats (as stated in the JNCC Phase 1 Handbook) and the flora species present within the survey area, with any further evidence of protected species usage and/or features of potential ecological interest also included. The field survey was carried out on the 20th of February 2025.

1.2 Site description and works

The site is situated in a rural setting within the village of Biddulph, around 5km southeast of the town of Congleton.

The site itself measures approximately 800m² and consists of one main habitat, which is disturbed improved grassland. The habitat on site has a negligible potential to support protected species.

Within the wider landscape, further habitats are present. These come in the form of residential buildings (and their associated gardens/yards), scattered woodland, arable land and pastureland. The habitats that surround the site have the potential to be utilized by a variety of protected species.

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2.1 Desktop Survey

A variety of resources were independently consulted to assess the known local records within the nearby area and the importance of the site within the local landscape from an ecological perspective. The resources used were the Local Records Centre, www.naturalengland.org.uk, www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk, Google Maps, Google Earth and Bing Maps. A search of other relevant nature conservation information was made through the use of the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database.

The local records centre was contacted to provide data on all protected species and sites within 2km of the proposed development site. Staffordshire Ecological Record (SER) was the relevant local record centre for this project

2.2 Field Survey

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (previously referred to as an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey) was carried out using the method outlined in the JNCC Handbook for *Phase 1 Habitat Survey: a technique for environmental audit (2010)*. This method aims to map and describe the broad habitat types and notable features present on the surveyed site.

As part of the field survey, the floral species will be identified and noted down. This will consider the dominant, abundant, frequent, occasional and rare (DAFOR) species within each habitat on the survey site. The impacts of the proposed development scheme will be assessed by this report.

Each habitat will be assessed for the presence and/or the potential presence of protected species. The impacts of the proposed scheme of works on all potential protected species on site will be assessed. From this, either remedial action or recommended phase 2 presence/absence surveys will be devised.

Some of the classification codes and colours listed within the JNCC handbook may have been slightly modified for this project.

Habitat Surveys can be carried out at any time of the year, with the optimal time period falling between the months of April through until September. This survey was carried out in February 2025, which is outside of the optimal time period for flora surveys however, the author feels confident that this report reflects an accurate representation of the site's suitability for protected species to be present / absent.

3.1 Statutory Sites

The ecological data received from SER confirmed the presence of no statutory protected site (e.g. LNR, SSSI, SPA, SAC or Ramsar) within the 2km radius of the site

3.2 Non-Statutory Sites

The ecological data received from SER confirmed the presence of seven nonstatutory protected site within 2km of the site. They are as follows:

Site Name	Designation	Approx. Distance (m)	Heading
The Sprink	Local Wildlife Site	1080	NW
Troughstone Hill	Local Wildlife Site	611	NW
The Ashes (north-east of)	Retained BAS	1990	SE
Cliff Wood	Local Wildlife Site	1760	SE
Cliff Wood (east-of)	Local Wildlife Site	1680	SE
Shirkley Wood	Local Wildlife Site	1130	NE
Pleasant View	Retained BAS	2000	N

3.3 Woodland Sites

The information provided by SER revealed eight Ancient and Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW) and one Ancient Replanted Woodland (ARW) sites within the 2km search radius. This is as follows:

Site Name	Designation	Approx. Distance (m)	Heading
At Sprinks Farm	ASNW	1120	SE
At Sprinks Farm	ASNW	1320	SE
At Sprinks Farm	ASNW	1140	SE
Cliff Wood	ASNW	1750	SE
Heath Hey Wood	ASNW	813	NW
Heath Hey Wood	ASNW	1030	NW
Heath Hey Wood	ARW	913	NW
Shirkley Wood	ASNW	1170	NE
Spring Wood	ASNW	1410	NW

3.4 Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)

The information provided by SER revealed no RIGS within the 2km search radius.

3.5 Species Records

3.5.1 Amphibians

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, one amphibian species has been identified within 2km from the survey site. This record is of one common toad (*Bufo bufo*) located approximately 1769m from the site centroid.

3.5.2 Birds

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, a total of 50 bird species were revealed within 2km of the site centroid. The closest record is of a barn owl (*Tyto alba*) located 1007m from the site.

3.5.3 Crustacean

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, no crustacean species have been revealed within 2km of the site.

3.5.4 Fish

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, no fish species have been revealed within 2km of the site.

3.5.5 Flora

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, four floral species have been revealed in the search radius. The nearest record to the survey site is of bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) identified approximately 1005m from the site centroid.

3.5.6 Fungi

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, no fungi species have been revealed within 2km of the site.

3.5.7 Invertebrates

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, 13 species have been identified within a 2km radius of the site. The nearest records to the site centroid were of a bumble bee (*Bombus*) and early bumble bee (*Bombus pratorum*), both identified approximately 1052m away.

3.5.8 Mammals

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, 16 mammal species were revealed within 2km of the site.

3.5.9 Molluscs

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, no mollusc species have been revealed within 2km of the site.

3.5.10 Reptiles

Within the ecological data search provided by SER, no reptile species have been revealed within 2km of the site.

4.1 Habitats

The preliminary ecological appraisal survey revealed one main habitat on site. The phase 1 habitat map, habitat codes and target notes for the site is drawing 3. The following habitats were recorded on site and in the surrounding area (in habitat code order):

On Site:

4.1.1 J1.2 / B4 – Improved Grassland

The entire site proposed for development consists of a single patch of land comprised entirely of improved grassland. The grass sward is of very short height and very species poor. The dominant species is comprised of perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*). The occasional common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), thistle (*Cirsium* sp.) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) were encountered around the edges of the site. Due to the condition and lack of suitable cover, this habitat has very little protected species.

Off Site:

4.1.2 J3 – Hardstanding

An area of hard standing ground is apparent for drives and buildings.

4.1.3 A1 – Woodland

4.1.4 G1 – Standing Water

Within a 500m radius of the site, 1 pond is present. Due to a lack of land access and habitats on site, it was not deemed necessary to survey the pond. The water features at the site were inspected, with this being one pond (P1) located to the south of the proposed works area.

P1 is an ornamental pond that contains very little suitable habitat around, with short amenity grassland present. The pond also appears to have very little marginal vegetation.

4.2 Species

The preliminary ecological appraisal survey revealed that the habitats that have been outlined for the proposed development area is of negligible potential to support protected species. Despite this, due to the extensive groundworks being undertaken close to the hedgerows and trees that surround the field, further mitigation is required due to the proximity of the pond to the south of the site (see below). The following assessment has also taken into account the adjacent habitats and connectivity to the wider landscape for all protected and rare species.

4.2.1 Amphibians (including great crested newts)

The survey uncovered no evidence of amphibians, no suitable habitat on site and no ponds present on the proposed works area.

4.2.2 Badgers

During the field survey, no evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) presence was found on the survey site or within the zone of influence from the proposed scheme of works.

4.2.3 Bats

There are no suitable roosting features, foraging habitat or commuting corridors present on site, with better habitat located in the surrounding area. The habitat that is present around the site is to remain intact. Therefore, no significant detrimental effect on bats will be incurred by the proposals.

4.2.4 Birds

The habitat surrounding the field proposed for development has no potential to support nesting birds. The cover is not sufficient, with the frequent disturbance from horses. Both of these factors lead to a conclusion of absence of nesting birds.

4.2.5 Dormice

The habitats located at the survey site were not deemed suitable to support any local hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) populations due to the features within.

4.2.6 Invertebrates

The habitats located on the site proposed for development are likely to support common species only. Therefore, no further action is required. Please see section 5.4 for potential enhancements.

4.2.7 Reptiles

The habitat located on the site is of 'negligible' potential to support reptiles. This is due to a lack of available cover and frequent disturbance. Due to this, no further action is required.

4.2.8 Other Species

No other species of conservation concern were evident on site at the time of survey. The habitats on site have do not have the potential to support any other rare/or valuable species.

4.3 Potential impacts of the works

Based upon the results from the desktop survey, field survey and using a degree of academic supposition, the uncompensated development impacts have been summarised as follows:

- Amphibians – Low
- Badgers – Negligible
- Bats – Negligible
- Birds – Negligible

- Flora – Low
- Dormice – Negligible
- Hedgehogs – Negligible
- Invertebrates – Negligible
- Reptiles – Negligible

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