C113505. Land at Great Wakering
Ecology Summary

This note provides an ecological summary associated with the proposed development of land at Great Wakering, Essex to support representations to the local planning authority with respect to the allocation of land at the site for residential and / or commercial use.

The site at Great Wakering was subject to an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey & Initial Ecological Appraisal in 2012. This assessment identified that the potential development area comprised predominately arable habitats with associated boundary features. The centre of the study area comprises Star Lane Pits Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which includes areas of plantation woodland, mixed grassland, scrub and open water habitats. It is understood that the Star Lane Pits LWS is currently unmanaged, and was designated for its mosaic of habitats and the plant and invertebrate species that have been recorded at the site. The habitats within the proposed development area are considered to be of negligible nature conservation importance, with the habitats within the Star Land Pits LWS being considered to be of County importance. During the survey, a number of bird and invertebrates (dragonfly and damselfly species) were noted within the LWS.

Based on the results of the study that was completed, the loss of arable land as a result of proposed development is not considered to be a significant ecological effect. It is understood that the development proposals include the retention of the Star Lane Pits LWS, with a potential small quantity of habitat loss on the western edge associated with installation of an access route. This habitat loss is considered to be minimal and will only effect small areas of rough grassland and scrub. As part of the development, large areas of public open space will be created to the south of the LWS which would be used for more formal recreation by residents from the site, with recreational use of the LWS being restricted to informal use. Whilst it is recognised that increased anthropogenic access to the LWS could have some adverse effects on the existing habitats, it is considered that development and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan for the LWS would not only ensure the maintenance of the current habitats at the site (which with no management may continue to scrub over, eventually leading to habitat change) but would also provide an opportunity to enhance the wildlife resource within the LWS. As part of any planning application for the site, consideration should be given to the presence of protected and notable species. The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey & Initial Ecological Appraisal report provided recommendations with respect to the protected and notable species surveys that would be required prior to the final design of any development on the site. On completion of the surveys, where necessary, mitigation strategies would need to be developed to control any adverse effects on flora or fauna during construction and operation.

The site is located approximately 1.30 km from the Foulness Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), Foulness (Mid Essex Coast Phase 5) Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and Important Bird Area (IBA), and Essex Estuaries Special Conservation Area (SAC). Whilst it is not anticipated that the development or operation of the site would have any direct impact on these Natura 2000 sites, consideration would need to be given to whether the lakes within Star Lane Pits LWS are being used by any breeding, wintering or passage birds that are qualifying features of these sites. It is considered unlikely that the use of these lakes by qualifying species would be significant in terms of the ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 sites and it is anticipated that, should any effects be identified, these can be mitigated for. It is anticipated that suitable pollution prevention measures would be instigated to ensure no adverse changes to water quality outfalls into the Natura 2000 sites.

Assuming that the necessary surveys, mitigation strategies and habitat management plans are produced and implemented, it can be concluded that any ecological effects associated with the development of the site in accordance with the current concept plans (Stanley Bragg Architects Concept Plans 6076/SK002 & 6067/SK001), could be suitably reduced to ensure that there were minimal residual ecological effects.

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