Land at Magpie Lane, Coleshill, Amersham
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

For Willis & Co.

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Version

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The report, and the information contained in it, is intended to be valid for a maximum of 12 months from the date of the survey, providing no significant alterations to the site have occurred.

Contents

1. Executive Summary

Ellendale Environmental was commissioned by Samuel Croft of Willis & Co., on behalf of his client, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site at Magpie Lane, Coleshill. The survey is to support a proposal to establish a free range rabbit farm on the site.

To fulfil the brief, an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was conducted for the site following the Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) to list the plant species associated with each habitat. A preliminary protected species walkover for the site was also conducted for the application site and immediate surrounding area.

The survey site is approximately 6.0 ha in size and is accessed via Magpie Lane. The application site is dominated by plantation of grape vines and other fruit trees and poor semi-improved grassland and poor semi-improved grassland. The survey area is bordered by a strip of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and scrub.

The proposed works for the site involve the erection of an agricultural building. The site provides limited suitable habitat for protected species and no evidence was found. Trees within the site are suitable for nesting birds and some passerine species were noted during the survey. The boundaries of the site provide the most suitable habitat for protected species however these will be unaffected by the proposed development.

Some recommendations are made within this report for modest post-construction ecological enhancements at the survey site that are proportionate with the low level of environmental impact from the development. These measures aim to increase the diversity of species present on the site after the completion of any future development works.

2. Introduction

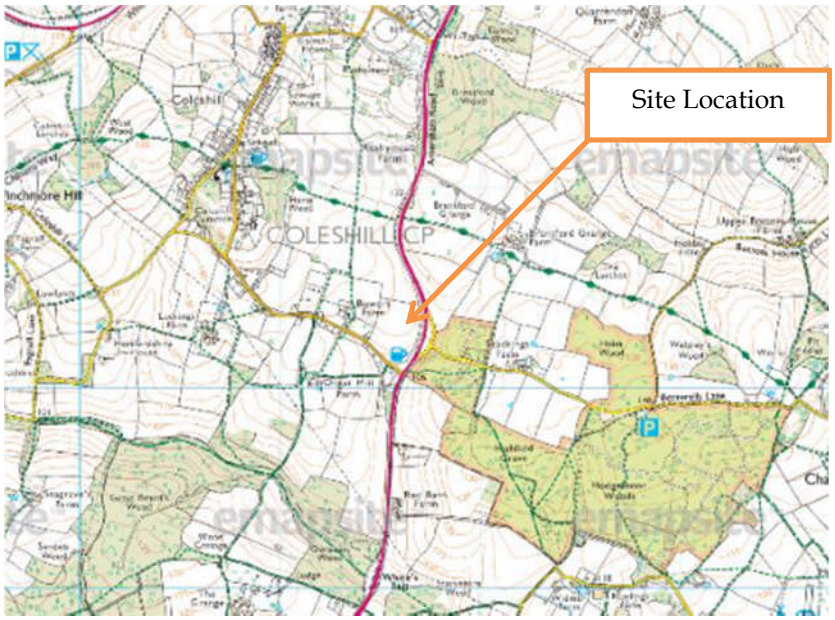
2.1 Commission

Ellendale Environmental was commissioned by Samuel Croft of Willis & Co., on behalf of his client, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for a site at Magpie Lane, Coleshill. The survey is to support a proposal for establishing a free range rabbit farm at the site, involving the erection of an agricultural building and widening of the site access. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal consists of an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Preliminary Protected Species Survey.

2.2 Site Details

The survey site is located at Magpie Lane, Coleshill, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP7 0LU at OS grid reference SU95579429.

Figure 1: Location Plan



2.3 Survey Objectives

On the basis of the brief provided by the client, Ellendale Environmental conducted an ecological survey to fulfil the following needs:

- Obtain baseline information on the current habitats and ecological features in and around the site;
- Identify any further specialist surveys that may be required;
- Identify the presence or potential presence of any protected species whose disturbance may require consent under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended); and
- Identify any species or habitats which may require special mitigation during the development of the site.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Search

Publically available databases including MAGIC and the NBN Atlas were consulted for historical evidence of;

- Statutory Land-Based Designations
- Non Statutory Land-Based Designations; and
- Protected Species.

The data search was conducted within a 2km radius of the site boundaries.

3.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

An Extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the survey area was undertaken and the habitats present on the site were mapped following the Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC, 2010), listing the plant species associated with each habitat. This methodology was an extended Phase 1 habitat survey, whereby all habitats were surveyed and recorded onto a base plan and any habitats that were considered to be of potential interest to nature conservation, were recorded through the use of target notes to annotate a Phase 1 habitat map.

The site and immediate vicinity was examined for the presence of any invasive weeds, such as Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* or giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*. If they were recorded they were highlighted through the use of target notes.

3.3 Preliminary Protected Species Survey

The site and immediate vicinity was examined for signs of protected species, particularly bats, badger and nesting birds, as it was

considered that the site had the greatest potential to support these species or groups of animals.

The presence/potential presence of protected or notable species of conservation concern was recorded using target notes, following the Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management guidance (IEEM, 2012).

3.4 Survey Area

The survey covered the entire site and areas within 30m (where accessible).

3.5 Survey Limitations

The aim of this survey was not to record every species present on the site, as one survey acts as a snap-shot, recording only those species which are present at the time or whose presence can be indicated through the occurrence of field signs, such as feeding remains, droppings or places used for shelter or foraging.

Evidence collected has been used to draw conclusions about the flora and fauna within the boundary of the site and to provide an assessment of their ecological and nature conservation value. Where it is suspected that species of nature conservation importance have the potential to be present, further more detailed surveys have been advised.

Weather was not a limiting factor to the survey. The prevailing conditions at the time of the survey are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Survey Weather Conditions

SURVEY DATE	TEMPERATURE (°C)	WIND CONDITIONS	CLOUD COVER / PRECIPITATION
29/01/19	4	10mph south west breeze	5% cloud cover, dry

4. Results

4.1 Ellendale Environmental

The survey was undertaken by Sarah Miller, an ecologist with Ellendale Environmental who has experience of undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals involving Phase 1 Habitat Surveys and preliminary protected species surveys.

4.2 Desk Study

A 2km data search for existing biological records was undertaken from publically available databases.

There is one statutory designated site within 2km of the site;

- Hodgemoor Wood is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is located 50m (east) from the site on the other side of the A355.

The following protected species are identified within 2km of the site boundaries by the data search. None of the records are from within the site:

- Water vole *Arvicola amphibious;*
- Badger *Meles meles;*
- Hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius;*
- Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri;*
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus;* and
- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus.*

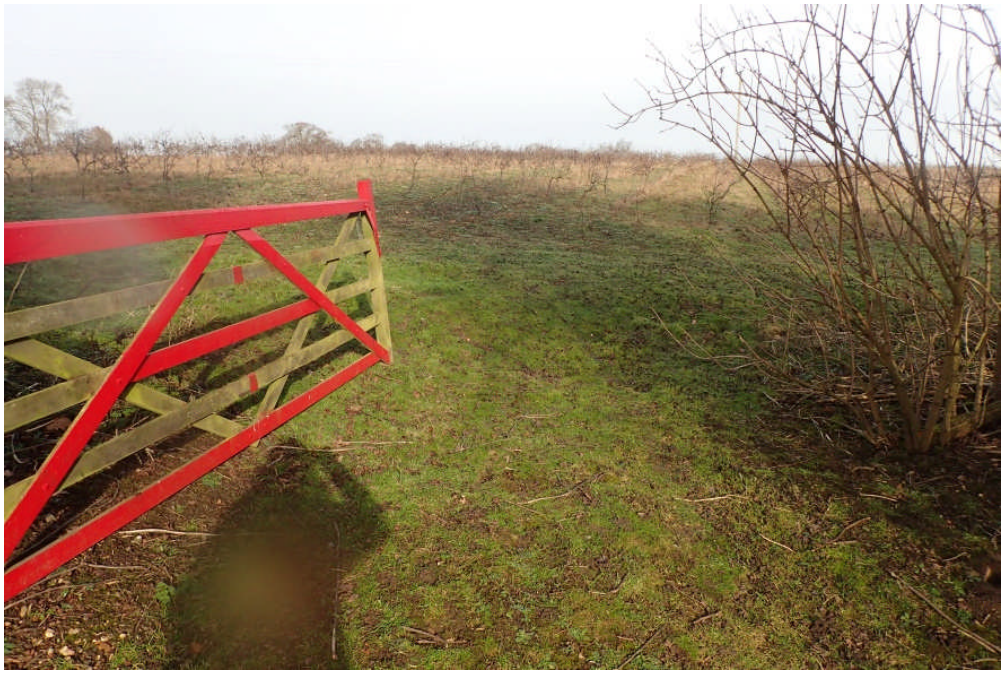
119 bird species have been recorded within 2km of the site and are shown on the NBN Atlas. None of these records are for birds within the site.

4.3 Extended Phase 1 Survey

The survey site is approximately 6.0 hectares in size. The site lies approximately 1 mile south east of Coleshill and consists of an area of arable land with a broadleaved woodland and scrub boundary. The site is bordered to the west by a residential property and associated amenity grassland. To the north east is arable land that extends along the north boundary of the site. The A355 is present along the east boundary and Magpie line is present along the south boundary of the site.

The site was accessed through a clearing in the scrub on the south of the site which leads to a gate into the field. There was evidence of fly tipping at the site entrance.

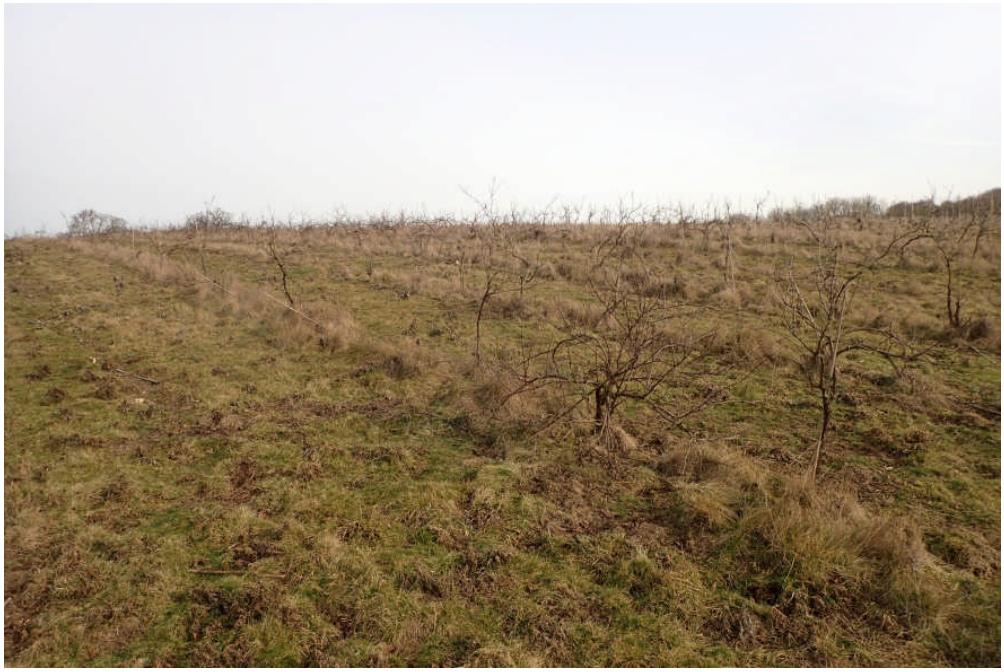
Picture 1: showing a view of the site from the entrance on the south boundary



The site consisted of arable land with a vineyard and fruit trees planted in rows across the site. The plants appeared in poor condition. The ground flora below the trees was short and consisted of poor-semi improved grassland with species including daisy *Bellis perennis,*

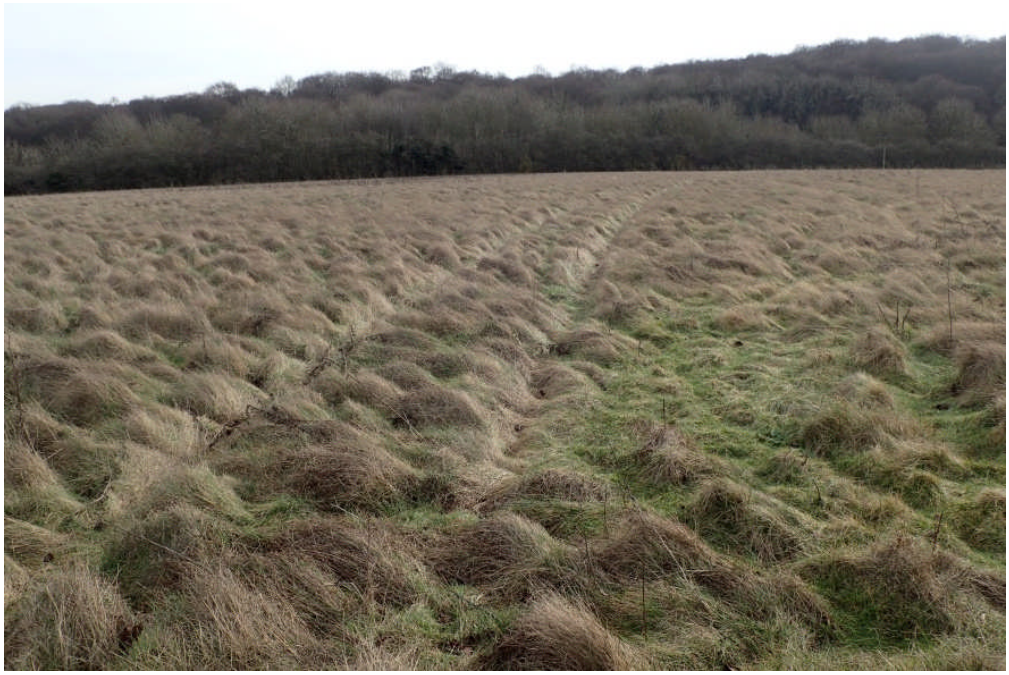
dandelion *Taraxacum* spp., ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* and bent grasses *Agrostis spp*. There was evidence of cultivation throughout; gardening gloves, plant pots, tarpaulin and water bowsers were present on site. Throughout the site there were vehicle tracks through the grass and areas where vegetation had been mown.

Picture 2: showing a view of the vines from the centre of the site



Between the planted trees and in unplanted areas the grass sward is longer with species including Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus,* cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata,* creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense, Veronica* spp., yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor,* common nettle *Urtica dioica*, cleavers *Galium aparine* and teasel *Dipsacus* spp. The area appeared to have a low level of maintenance.

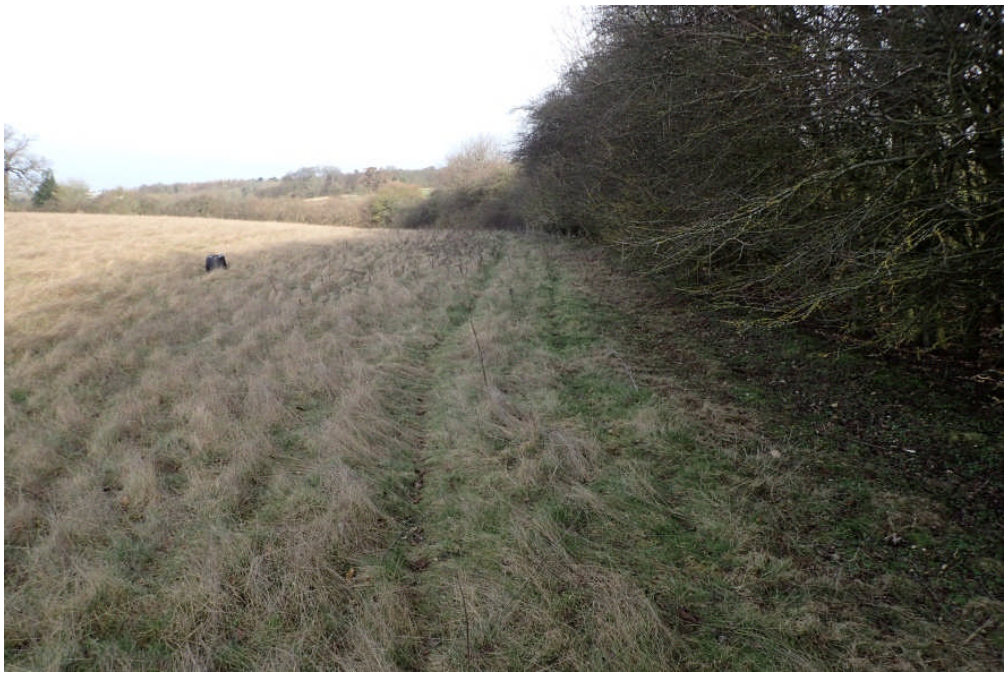
Picture 3: showing longer grass with vehicle track



Scrub and semi natural broadleaved woodland is present around the entire boundary of the site of the site. Along the east boundary species present include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna,* dog rose *Rosa canina,* wild cherry *Prunus avium* and elder *Sambucus nigra* with an understory of ivy *Hedera helix* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg..

Vegetation was dense in some areas and ground flora was lacking due to a dense canopy. A barbed wire fence was present on the east boundary of the site and was identified in a bad condition and broken in many sections.

Picture 4: showing a view of the east boundary



On the north boundary additional species included hazel *Corylus avellana* some of which was coppiced, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and two large mature oak trees *Quercus* spp. Below the oak trees there was no ground flora which left a gap in the site boundary into an arable field to the north.

Along the west boundary there was a very dense strip of bramble. There were also broadleaved trees including four mature oak trees, a mature beech tree Fagus sylvatica, blackthorn Prunus spinosa and holly Ilex aquifolium. Beyond the west boundary there was a field of poor semi-improved grassland used for grazing four alpacas. Beside the field there was a residential property.

Picture 5: showing a view of the west boundary and oak tree

Along the south there was a boundary of broadleaved woodland and scattered scrub. The vegetation here was not dense and included ash, elder and holly with ivy growing on some of the trees.

Picture 6: showing a view of the south boundary

4.4 Preliminary Protected Species Survey

The arable land within the site is of limited suitability for protected species and no evidence was found during the survey.

The boundaries of the site provide the most suitable habitat to support protected species, mainly nesting birds. Mature trees in the woodland strip are suitable to provide habitat for nesting birds. Mature trees provide habitat for large bird species. Nests were noted in the mature trees around the boundary of the site.

Throughout the whole site rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* droppings were noted and on the boundaries rabbit burrows and rabbits were seen. To the north of the field there were several small animal shelters and black bowsers.

It is understood that the boundaries of the site will be unaffected by the proposed development. The mature trees and scrub provide habitat for bat species and hazel dormouse. Should the development impact on these habitats further survey for these species will be required. It is recommended that a buffer between the works and the boundary be kept to provide a corridor for protected species.

No evidence of protected species was identified.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The survey area consisted of arable land with a boundary of scrub and broadleaved trees.

The arable land has limited suitability for protected species. The scrub and broadleaved tree boundary of the site provides the best habitat for protected species. However, the boundary will not be affected by the proposed development. If the boundaries are to be affected then further survey may be required.

No evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.

In summary, there are no ecological reasons that would limit the use of the site for the proposed activities.

5.2 Main Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the project timescales;

- As part of any eventual construction, it is recommended that any vegetation clearance is undertaken outside of the bird breeding season, i.e. March to July, as all nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). If nesting birds are found, these areas of the site will need to be protected from disturbance until the young have fledged naturally.
- As part of the design and layout considered as part of any future planning application, bird nesting boxes, both small hole and open fronted, could be placed within the site if possible. This could create nesting opportunities for small bird species as part of the overall design.

- As part of the design and layout considered as part of any future planning application, bat boxes could be placed on or around the site boundaries. This could create roosting opportunities for bat species as part of the overall design.
- As part of the design and layout considered as part of any future planning application, groundworks should not take place within tree root protection areas.
- As part of the design and layout considered as part of any future planning application, lighting should be designed to minimise light spill onto the woodland/scrub boundaries of the site which are likely to be of use for feeding/commuting bats.

6. Target Notes

6.1 Botanical Target Notes (TN)

TN1- Site was accessed through a clearing in the scrub which led to a gate. There was also evidence of fly tipping.

TN2- Broadleaf woodland on the eastern boundary consisting of hawthorn, dog rose, elder with an understory of ivy and bramble. Ground flora was limited but included nettle and cleavers.

TN3- Some areas of the field had shorter grass, possibly from mowing, and there was evidence of vehicle tracks throughout the field.

TN4 Broadleaved woodland on the north boundary including hazel (some coppice), elder, ash, hawthorn and two large mature oak trees. Yellow rattle was noted in the ground flora along with dense patches of creeping thistle.

TN5- Areas of poor-semi improved grassland including Yorkshire fog, bent grasses, cocks foot, creeping thistle, ragwort, daisy, speedwell and dandelion. Grass was shorter beneath planted trees.

TN6- Planted rows of fruit trees. Evidence of cultivation throughout site; plant pots, gardening gloves and animal shelters.

TN7- Very dense bramble in corner of site.

TN8- Western boundary consisting of broadleaved woodland including 4 large mature oak trees and a mature beech. Holly and ash also present. Dense strip of bramble on western boundary.

TN9- Further semi-improved grassland with the addition of teasel. Tarpaulin on ground.

TN10- Three water bowsers in corner of field.

TN11- Scattered scrub and broadleaved woodland boundary to the south of site consisting of ash, elder, holly, with ivy growing on some trees. Scrub not dense on south - Magpie Lane was visible through scrub.

TN12- Large areas of planted fruit trees and grape vines. The ground flora was short, poor semi-improved grassland.

6.2 Animal Target Notes (AN)

AN1 – Rabbit burrows and rabbits/droppings seen throughout survey site.

AN2- Squirrel drey in cherry tree.

AN3- Three blue tits in scrub.

AN4- Male pheasant flushed from understory.

AN5- Grey squirrel in mature oak tree.

AN6- Dunnock perched on bramble.

AN7- Blackbird foraging in vegetation.

AN8- Woodpigeons in trees.

AN9- Three female pheasants flushed from a gathering of black plant pots.

AN10- Red kite seen flying over site throughout the duration of the survey.

AN11- Magpie and carrion crow within trees.

AN12- Rabbits among bramble. A lot of rabbit droppings.

AN13- Four alpaca grazing in adjacent field.

AN14- Bird nest within a tree beyond the dense bramble.

7. Extended Phase 1 Map

N

AN8
TN4
AN5
AN4
AN9
TN7
AN7
AN6
AN3
AN14
TN6
TN5
AN13
TN8
AN10
AN11
AN12
AN2
AN1
TN3
TN12
TN9
TN10
TN2
TN11
TN1

A

ELLENDALE ENVIRONMENTAL

Drawing Title
Land at Magpie Lane, Coleshill, Amersham
Extended Phase 1 Drawing

Client
Willis & Co.
Chartered Town Planners

Date	Drawn By
09/02/2019	SP

Project Number	Issue
EEL191	V 1.0

Target Note
- TN

Animal Note
- AN

Woodland and Scrub
- Scattered Scrub
- Broadleaf Woodland
- Dense Scrub

Miscellaneous
- Hard Standing

Grassland
- A — Arable Land