



Land at Magpie Lane, Coleshill
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
For *Willis & Co.*

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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.



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1. Executive Summary

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by Willis & Co., on behalf of their client, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) for a site at Magpie Lane, Coleshill ('the site'). It is proposed to erect a temporary rural worker dwelling and agricultural building with access and parking on the site ('the proposed development').

Surveys undertaken at the site as part of the PEA included an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and a Preliminary Protected Species walkover. The Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to list the plant species associated with each habitat. The preliminary protected species walkover was conducted for the site and the surrounding area.

The site is approximately 5.5 hectares in size and is accessed via Magpie Lane. It is dominated by a plantation of grape vines and other fruit trees, along with an area of poor semi-improved grassland and is bordered by a strip of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and scrub.

The site is assessed as providing 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, namely nesting birds: however, it is understood that these will be unaffected by the proposed development.

Some recommendations are made for modest post-construction ecological enhancements at the site that are proportionate with the low level of environmental impact from the proposed 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 Limited was commissioned by Willis & Co., on behalf of their client, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) for a site at Magpie Lane, Coleshill ('the site'). It is proposed to erect a temporary rural worker dwelling and agricultural building with access and parking on the site ('the proposed development').

The PEA and this report have been written with cognisance to previous reports and surveys undertaken at the site, namely:

- *EEL191R190213SM Magpie Lane Coleshill Amersham PEA CIC v1.0- Ellendale Environmental, February 2019.*

2.2 Site Details

The land in the applicant's control extends to 5.5 hectares and is located off the main road linking Amersham and Beaconsfield, just outside of Coleshill at Magpie Lane, Coleshill, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP7 0LU at OS grid reference SU 95570 94290.



Figure 1: Site location



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2.3 Survey Objectives

On the basis of the brief provided by the client, Ellendale Environmental conducted an ecological survey of the site and a 50m buffer (where accessible and appropriate) 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 Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) or 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

Publicly 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. This was extended to 5km for bat species.

3.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

An Extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site was undertaken and the habitats present 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.

3.3 Preliminary Protected Species Survey

The site and immediate vicinity was examined for signs of protected species, particularly bats, badger *Meles meles* 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 50m (where accessible and appropriate).

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, furthermore 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
16/12/21	11	0.0 Avg. 0.2 Max.	95% cloud cover, overcast, dry and still

3.6 Surveyor

The survey was undertaken by Stewart Parsons, Director and Principal Ecologist of Ellendale Environmental, who is a full member of CIEEM and a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). Stewart has over 18 years' professional experience of undertaking ecological surveys across the UK.



4. Results

4.1 Desk Study

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

There are two statutory designated sites within 2km of the site, namely:

- ☛ The site is located within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and
- ☛ 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; however, none of these records are from within the site:

- ☛ Water vole *Arvicola amphibious*;
- ☛ Badger;
- ☛ 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.

4.2 Extended Phase 1 Survey

The survey site is approximately 5.5 hectares in size and is located approximately one mile south-east of Coleshill in Buckinghamshire



and comprises an area of poor semi-improved grassland with a plantation of grape vines and other fruit trees. A broadleaved woodland and scrub boundary is present around the site.

The site is bordered to the north by agricultural land. To the east there is the A355, beyond which is further agricultural land. Magpie Lane is present along the southern boundary of the site, beyond which are residential properties and agricultural land. To the west there is agricultural land and residential properties.

Photograph 1: showing a view of the site from the southern boundary



The site consists of poor semi-improved grassland that has become overgrown and was tall at the time of the survey (in December 2021) with no evidence of recent management identified in previous surveys of the site.

Species such as daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum spp.*, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, bent grasses *Agrostis spp.*, Yorkshire fog



Holcus lanatus, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, speedwells *Veronica spp.*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, willow herb *Epilobium sp.*, and teasel *Dipsacus spp.* were present. No evidence of recent management, such as mowing of the grassland, was found during the survey.

Photograph 2: showing a view of the site



A former vineyard and fruit trees were planted in rows across the site and, at the time of the survey, appeared to be in a poor condition and smothered by the tall grassland and some bramble *Rubus fruticosus sp.*



Photograph 3: showing a view of the vine plantation



Scrub and semi natural broadleaved woodland is present around the entire boundary of the site. Along the eastern 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.

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



Photograph 4: showing a view of the eastern boundary



On the northern 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 western 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 western boundary there was a field of poor semi-improved grassland used for grazing four alpacas. Beside the field there was a residential property.



Photograph 5: showing a view of the western boundary



Along the south of the site 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.

4.3 Preliminary Protected Species Survey

The poor semi-improved grassland 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, namely nesting birds. Some old nests were noted in the hedgerows; however, these were not active at the time of the survey. Mature trees present along the boundaries of the site also provide habitat for larger bird species; however, no evidence of nests suitable for larger bird species, such as birds of prey, were noted in the trees during the survey.



Throughout the whole site rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* droppings were noted and, on the boundaries, rabbit burrows and rabbits were noted to be present during the survey.

No evidence of badger was found during the survey and no evidence of runs or digging was found.

The mature trees along the boundaries of the site provide few opportunities for roosting bats and no cracks, cervices or dead limbs suitable for roosting bats were found during the survey. The trees and hedgerow boundaries are suitable to provide foraging for bat species.

No refugia or hibernacula suitable to support common reptile or amphibian species was noted during the survey. No waterbodies are present that could support breeding amphibians. Previous management of the site is likely to limit the presence of common reptile and amphibian species.

Overall, the site is assessed as providing low suitability to support protected species and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.



5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The survey site is approximately 5.5 hectares in size and is located approximately one mile south-east of Coleshill in Buckinghamshire. It consists of an area of poor semi-improved grassland, now largely overgrown, with a plantation of grape vines and other fruit trees that were in a poor condition.

The poor semi-improved grassland has limited suitability for protected species and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.

There was no evidence of mammal species, such as badger, present within the site or immediate surroundings during the survey. No evidence of runs, latrines or digging was found and the wet ground may limit the suitability of the site to support these species.

The trees and hedgerows present along the boundaries of the site provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of common bird species. However, no nests were recorded at the time of survey. No nests for larger bird species, such as birds of prey, were noted during the survey.

It is understood that the boundaries of the site will be unaffected by the proposed development. The mature trees and scrub provide habitat for nesting birds and foraging bat species. 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 providing a corridor for protected species to foraging and move between habitats.



Overall, the site is assessed as providing low suitability to support protected species and 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 development.

5.2 Main Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the project timescales:

- ☛ As part of any eventual construction, it is recommended that 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, bird nesting boxes, both small-hole and open-fronted, should be placed within the site and along the boundaries. This will create nesting opportunities for small bird species as part of the overall design.
- ☛ As part of the design and layout considered, bat boxes should be placed on or around the site boundaries. This will create roosting opportunities for bat species as part of the overall design.
- ☛ Groundworks should not take place within tree root protection areas. A buffer between the temporary rural worker dwelling, agricultural building and boundaries of the site should be maintained to protect any species present from disturbance.
- ☛ As part of the design and layout considered, 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 – An area of scrub at the entrance to the site. Some fly tipping was also noted.

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

TN4 – Areas of poor-semi improved grassland including Yorkshire fog, bent grasses, cock's foot, creeping thistle, ragwort, daisy, speedwell and dandelion. Grass was shorter beneath planted trees.

TN5 – Planted rows of fruit trees that were found to be in a poor condition.

TN6 – An area of dense bramble in the corner of site.

TN7 – Western boundary consisting of broadleaved woodland including four large mature oak trees and a mature beech. Holly and ash also present. Dense strip of bramble on western boundary.

TN8 – Further semi-improved grassland with the addition of teasel.

TN9 – Scattered scrub and broadleaved woodland boundary to the south of the site consisting of ash, elder, holly, with ivy growing on some trees. Scrub not dense on southern boundary, as Magpie Lane was visible through scrub.



TN10 - Large areas of planted fruit trees and grape vines. The ground flora was dominated by tall poor semi-improved grassland.

6.2 Animal Target Notes (AN)

AN1 - An area of scrub provides suitable habitat for nesting bird species.

AN2 - The hedgerow provides suitable habitat for nesting birds. Evidence of rabbit burrows and rabbits/droppings were noted along the boundary. Mature trees do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging habitat.

AN3 - The hedgerow provides suitable habitat for nesting birds. Mature trees do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging habitat.

AN4 - An area of scrub provides suitable habitat for nesting bird species.

AN5 - The hedgerow provides suitable habitat for nesting birds. Mature trees do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging habitat.

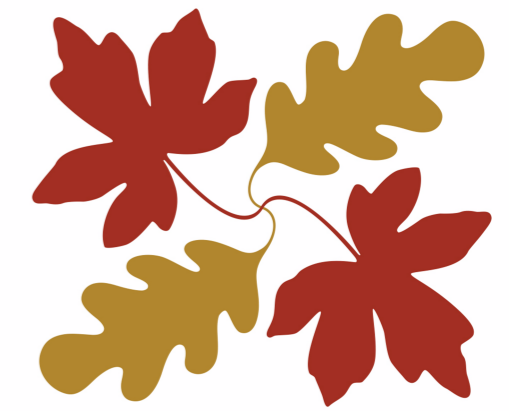
AN6 - An area of scrub provides suitable habitat for nesting bird species.

AN7 - The hedgerow provides suitable habitat for nesting birds. Mature trees do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging habitat.

AN8 - Grassland within the site is limited in its suitability to support protected species. At the time of the survey the grassland sward height was tall; however, previous management of the site through regular clearance may limit the suitability for protected species.



7. Extended Phase 1 Map



ELLENDALE
ENVIRONMENTAL

Drawing Title;
Magpie Lane, Coleshill
Extended Phase 1 Map

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- Target Note**
● TN
- Animal Note**
● AN
- Woodland and Scrub**
× Scattered Scrub
■ Broadleaf Woodland / Dense Hedgerow
▨ Dense Scrub
- Miscellaneous**
▤ Hard Standing (Roads)
- Grassland**
SI Poor Semi-Improved Grassland

