



Sandleford Park, Newbury

Appendix F6: Nightjar Survey



Bloor Homes & The Sandleford Farm Partnership

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Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located at Sandleford Park in Newbury, West Berkshire, centred on OS Grid Reference SU 46847 64550. The site comprises agricultural fields with areas of grassland and several copses of ancient woodland. A central valley runs from the north-western corner of the site towards the River Enborne at the site's southern boundary.
Existing Site Information	WYG completed an initial ecological appraisal in 2008 with update surveys completed in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Appendix F1). Nightjar surveys were completed in 2011, 2014, and 2018.
Scope of this Survey(s)	A review of the findings of the surveys, and an assessment against the current proposals.
Results	Nightjar are not considered to be present on site.
Recommendations	Forestry clearance work may create opportunities for nesting nightjars. If work is required to clear woodland during the nesting season (May – August), update nightjar surveys are recommended to be undertaken. However, future maintenance and enhancement works are recommended to take place overwinter to avoid nesting birds and dormice as outlined within the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (EMMP, Appendix F18).



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The nightjar is a nocturnal bird which migrates to the UK from Africa in April and May, returning in August and September. Nightjars feed on moths and beetles and favour heathlands, moorlands, open woodland with clearings and recently felled conifer plantations. Breeding birds nest on the ground. Nightjars are best observed at dusk and dawn on warm, still summer evenings. During the breeding season, the distinctive 'churring' song of the male bird can be heard at distances of up to 1km.

Nightjar surveys were recommended at Sandleford Park as this species had been noted by a regular user of the site. Being nocturnal, nightjars would not be recorded by the standard breeding bird surveys taking place at the site. The site was considered by WYG ecologists to be sub-optimal for breeding nightjars, but some potential breeding habitat was present in the form of woodland clearings.

The current review has been prepared by Associate Ecologist Tamsin Clark MCIEEM in February 2019, based upon the survey reports.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located at Sandleford Park in Newbury, West Berkshire and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 46847 64550. The survey area, hereafter referred to as the 'site', comprises of agricultural fields with areas of grassland and several copses of ancient woodland dispersed throughout. A central valley runs from the north-western corner of the site towards the River Enborne at the site's southern boundary.

For details of the development description, please see the main ES chapter.

1.3 Purpose of the Report

A review of the findings of the nightjar survey with regards to the current proposals for the site.



2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Previous Reports

An extended Phase 1 habitat survey was completed at Sandleford Park during May 2011. The extended Phase 1 habitat survey identified potentially suitable habitat for nightjars. Nightjar surveys were completed during July 2011. WYG completed an update extended Phase 1 habitat survey in April 2013, which recommended an update nightjar survey; this was completed in 2014. An update Ecological Appraisal (Appendix F1) has found that the habitats present on site have not changed significantly since the earlier nightjar surveys, however, to ensure that the survey data remained valid, update nightjar surveys were completed in 2018.

2.1.2 Local Ecological Records Centre

Up to date information was requested from both HBIC and TVERC in December 2017 for information on any nature conservation designations and protected or notable species records within 2 km of the site.

The data search covers:

- Statutory designated sites for nature conservation, namely SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites, SSSIs, NNRs and LNRs;
- Non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation, namely LWS;
- Legally protected species, such as great crested newts, bats and badger;
- Notable habitats and species, such as those listed as Habitats or Species of Principal Importance; and,
- Priority habitats or species within the Berkshire LBAP.

The data search did not cover:

- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs); or
- Conservation Areas designated for their special architectural and historic interest.

2.2 Field Surveys

The nightjar surveys were carried out in accordance with methods recommended in the RSPB Bird Monitoring Methods guidance (Gilbert *et al.*, 1998). The ideal time to undertake nightjar surveys is from June to mid-July. Dry, drizzly and humid conditions are all suitable, but surveys should not be undertaken in winds greater than Beaufort force 3.

Survey visits were undertaken during mid-June and July. Timings and weather conditions are shown in Table 1, below. The survey involved a walkover of the survey area, covering each area over at least four and a half hours, finishing around and hour after sunset. During the walkover, the surveyors monitored the site for flying nightjars and also listened for singing males. Any nightjars recorded would have their location noted along with their behaviour. This would enable an assessment of the number of breeding male territories to be undertaken.



2.3 Limitations

The surveys were conducted in suitable weather conditions to record birds, albeit some of the surveys were undertaken towards the end of the optimal survey period. However, given the number of repeat surveys completed, we have confidence in the survey results.



3.0 Results

3.1 Desk Study

HBIC returned four records of nightjar within 2km of the site. The grid reference for the records were given as SU4762 and SU4763. The nearest record is located within Newtown Common approximately 1km south from site. It is not known whether the record is of breeding birds.

TVERC returned twenty-five records of nightjar within 2km of the site. All records were within Greenham common with closest being at SU482 647 approximately 1.4km east of the site. It is not known if these records relate to breeding birds.

3.2 Survey Dates and Weather Conditions

Table 1: Nightjar survey dates and weather conditions (2018)

Date	Start	Finish	Temperature (°C)	Wind (Beaufort)	Cloud cover (%)	Precipitation
21.06.2018	20:26	23:00	14	0	15	None
09.07.2018	20:21	22:55	24	1	0	None

3.3 Survey Results

No nightjars were recorded during the surveys.



4.0 Relevant Legislation and Guidance

4.1 EU Birds Directive 1979

Nightjars are listed under Annex 1 of the EU 'Birds' Directive (1979), which lists 194 species that are subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction. Member States are required to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the Annex 1 and all migratory species. SPAs are scientifically identified areas critical to the survival of the targeted species. The SPAs form part of the Natura 2000 EU network of protected nature sites. The designation of an area as an SPA gives it a high level of protection from potentially damaging developments (European Commission (EC) 2004).

4.2 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Nightjars are also listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 which considers species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England, in accordance with the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Berkshire does not currently have Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species targets; however nightjar appears on the Hampshire BAP.

4.3 Birds of Conservation Concern

The conservation status of all regularly occurring British birds has been analysed in co-operation with the leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Birdlife International Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (Eaton *et al.*, 2015). The basis of species ongoing population trends are assigned to one of three lists of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC). These are the UK Red, Amber and Green list. Although the lists confer no legal status in themselves, they are useful in evaluating the conservation significance of bird assemblages, and for assessing the potential significance of impacts and informing appropriate levels of mitigation with respect to bird populations. The nightjar is listed on the BoCC Red List. The criteria for Red List birds are as follows:

- Globally threatened
- Historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995
- Severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period (the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969).
- Severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period



5.0 Discussion & Recommendations

5.1 Interpretation

No nightjars were recorded during the 2018 surveys or during the previous surveys conducted 2011 and 2014. All the surveys were undertaken in optimal conditions. Therefore it is considered unlikely that nightjars were breeding at the Sandleford site during these years.

Although nightjars have reportedly been seen using the site in previous years, the habitat within the site is considered sub-optimal as breeding habitat. The majority of the site – dense woodland and arable fields – is considered unsuitable for breeding nightjars (Gilbert *et al*, 2002). Areas of grassland occur within the central valley and an area south-east of High Wood, which offers some sub-optimal habitat for nesting birds, but this was cut during early July, mid-way through the breeding season. If this is repeated annually, there would be a lower risk of birds successfully nesting in this area.

It is considered that nightjars seen previously within the site may have been using the site temporarily to feed before proceeding to more suitable breeding grounds. For instance, Greenham Common, directly to the east of the site, is known to have a breeding population of nightjars in good quality heathland habitat. In addition, nightjars have been recorded off site within Newton Common to the south.

As no nightjars were recorded during the surveys and the habitat within the site is sub-optimal for breeding nightjars, it is considered unlikely that nightjars would breed within the site. Therefore no mitigation for breeding nightjars is considered necessary for the proposed development of the site.

The site may provide a feeding area for nightjars en-route to their breeding grounds, as the habitats within the site may support good numbers of moths and beetles. As the woodlands will be retained within the development, along with a 15 metre buffer surrounding them, the volume of prey items for nightjars would not be expected to decrease significantly under the proposed scheme.

Whilst the site is broadly unsuitable or sub-optimal for breeding nightjars, there is a chance that the species may breed within woodland clearings within the site. If woodland clearance operations are due to take place, this may increase the suitability of the site, as more clearings may be created. Therefore it is recommended that any works affecting woodland clearings is undertaken outside the nesting bird season, generally considered to take place between March and September (inclusive) each year. If this is not possible, an update nightjar survey of affected areas should be undertaken to identify any potential nesting areas. If active nests are found to be present, no disturbance will be permitted until all young have fledged from the nest(s). Nightjars attempt a second brood in most years, usually commencing in early July with the young fledging in September. These precautions are included within the Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (Appendix F18).

5.2 Summary

Nightjar is presumed not present on site; habitats have not changed on site since the original surveys and are still considered sub-optimal for breeding nightjars. Mitigation for breeding nightjars is not considered necessary for the proposed development of the site



6.0 References

- Eaton, M.A. et al., (2015) Birds of Conservation Concern 4: The population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. .
- Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W. and Evans, J. (2002) Bird monitoring methods a manual of techniques for key UK species, RSPB, Sandy Bedfordshire