Module MOD007045 Assignment E010

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) for a hypothetical development project in Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits

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# Introduction

* 1. This report details an ecology Phase1 habitat survey of Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits (East) and Lime Kiln Close Local Nature Reserve (The Spinney) on the South East side of Cambridge. The pits are former chalk quarries which provided building material for surrounding buildings and Cambridge Colleges. The East Pit was worked until the 1980s – Lime Kiln Close ceased quarrying 200 years ago.(History of Cherry Hinton, 2019)
  2. The survey area covers 12 hectares.

# The development proposal

* 1. Our understanding of the proposal is to develop an estate of 150 houses on the chalk pit site and a community area including a community farm on the Lime Kiln Close site.

# Methods

## Desktop research

* 1. Data to assess taxa observed within a 2km radius of the site was drawn from the:
* NBN Atlas(NBN Atlas, 2007) which records species observations from a wide range of sources
* DEFRAs Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countrysideservice(MAGIC, 2013) which was used to identify statutory or non-statutory site designations
* the British Botanical Society (BSBI maps, 2021) for preliminary results of the latest British Botanic Survey
* and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre(Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre, 2010) to cross check records and identify other potential features of ecological or conservation value.

Key results from the desktop research are shown in Annex.

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## Habitat survey

* 1. A phase 1 habitat survey was conducted by a site visit on 8th February 2022. We were not able assess flowering plants or breeding birds given the time of year.
  2. The site survey included
     1. mapping and classifying on-site habitats according to the Natural Classification system
     2. Identifying Habitats of Principal Importance (S41 of NERC Act (2006))(UK Government, 2006)
     3. Identifying presence or potential for presence of European Protected species, species of Principal Importance, or other rare or notable species

# Results

* 1. The dominant landscapes on the site are broadleaf woodland and calcareous grassland which form 37% and 54% of habitat respectively. The East Pit is surrounded by chalk cliffs edged by scattered scrub with dense scrub along the northern and western boundaries and broadleaf woodland along the Lime Kiln Road boundary.

Chart

Description automatically generated

Figure 1 Distribution of habitat types on site

* 1. A detailed map of the habitat is shown in Figure 2.
* The broadleaf woodland is dominated by Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Field Maple *Acer campestre* with a stand of cherry trees (see target note 8).
* Dense scrub is largely bramble *Rubus ulmifolius* , blackthorn *Prunus spinosa,* buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica,* hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea,*  interspersed with mature ash trees
* Scattered scrub including Cotoneaster and Pyracantha species, *Clematis vitalba,* Dog Rose, *Rosa canina*.
* The grassland area is mainly carpeted with mosses and lichens interspersed with Spiny rush *Juncus acutus.*
* Buddleia *Buddleia davidii*  was present at the south end of the East pit and was noted to have colonised the cliff face. Buddleia is an invasive species and had been cut back in several places.

Diagram

Description automatically generatedChart, surface chart

Description automatically generated

The Spinney

East Pit

Figure 2 Habitat map showing landscape types, with target notes outlining particular features or observations

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Table Target notes

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number | Date | Georeference | Point of interest | Significance |
| 1 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1817, 0.1717 | Rabbit hole | Evidence of rabbit presence – rabbit populations fell by over 4% between 2008 and 2018 due to Rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus type 2 |
| 2 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1824, 0.1716 | Muntjac footprints |  |
| 3 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1823, 0.1711 | Green woodpecker sighting | Woodpecker holes provide potential nesting sites for birds and roosting sites for bats |
| 4/10 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1817, 0.1705 | Greenfinch heard singing from dense scrub | Greenfinch is a red-listed species(Stanbury et al., 2021) |
| 5 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1827, 0.1714 | Buzzard circling over woodland | Buzzards are schedule 1 protected species. Buzzard numbers vary with rabbit populations |
| 6 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1826, 0.1716 | Goldfinches in ash trees | Woodland provides potential breeding sites for many birds |
| 7 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1825, 0.1718 | Possible badger sett with “D” shaped entrance | Badgers are protected species |
| 8 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1824, 0.1719 | Wild cherry trees | Derived from original cherry tree plantation |
| 9 | 08-02-2022 | 52.1833, 0.1711 | Rabbit droppings | Evidence of presence of rabbits – now a Near threatened species |
| 11 | 08-02-2022 | NA, NA | Red kite sighting over south cliff | Red kites are a protected species |

# Key ecological features of the site

* 1. These are summarised in Table 2 based on protected, endangered or vulnerable species, sites with designation and protected habitats
  2. The East Pit is part of Cherry Hinton Chalk Pit SSSI with the West Pit on the other side of Lime Kiln Road. The SSSI was designated in 1986 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, on the basis of the presence of 4 rare plants found on the site - of which 3 are on the red list for plants. These are great pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum*, moon carrot *Seseli libanotis* and grape hyacinth *Muscari neglectum.* The other rare plant recorded is perennial flax *Linum perenne ssp. anglicum*.
  3. Together with Wandlebury and the Gog Magog Downs, Cherry Hinton CHCP is part of the Cambridge Living Chalk Landscape, an interconnected series of chalk grasslands to the South East of Cambridge. It includes Cherry Hinton Brook – a clear chalk stream which arises from Spring Head – the village pond – 100m from The Spinney and drains into the River Cam.

### Bats

* 1. Noctule *Nyctalus noctula,* Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and Soprano Pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus pygmaeus,* have been observed in the surrounding area and the woodland provides potential roosting sites. Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive.

### Birds

* 1. A number of protected bird species frequent the site or have been well recorded in the surrounding area. During the field visit, House sparrows *Passer domesticus* and Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* were noted in the wooded area and Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* was heard singing in the dense scrub at the north end of the chalk pit. The greenfinch is now a red-listed species.(Stanbury et al., 2021)

### Mammals

* 1. During the site visit evidence of a (probably inactive) badger sett was noted and there have been consistent records of badger *Meles meles* over the last 10 years. Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
  2. Hedgehogs *Erinaceous europaeus* are also found in the area and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (schedule 6) and classified as Vulnerable (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021)
  3. There have been European Water Vole sightings along Cherry Hinton Brook - a chalk stream which is fed from a spring 70m from the development site.

### Vascular plants

### Bryophytes

* 1. The survey site is well known for its variety of mosses (Bryophytes) and lichens with over 150 species noted. In particular the Chalk screw-moss *Tortula vahliana* has been recorded and the pits are one of very few sites in England where this rare moss is found.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Table 2 Features of Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits of conservation or ecological value. Sources: (NBN Atlas, 2007; DEFRA, 2013; BSBI maps, 2021)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Species / type | Scientific name | Location | Protection | Potential impacts of development on species or habitat |
| Habitat | Deciduous woodland |  | Study area | UK BAP Priority Habitat (JNCC, 2011),  S41, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (UK Government, 2006) | Development would remove plants and mature trees which provide food (seeds, nuts, fruits) for birds and small mammals and nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats. |
|  | Lowland calcareous grassland |  | Study area | UK BAP Priority Habitat (JNCC, 2011),  S41, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (UK Government, 2006) | Calcareous grassland has nutrient poor soil which discourages the growth of grasses and supports a range of specialist and rare species. Calcareous grassland is rare in the East of England and the SSSI designation (see below) reflects that. |
| Designations | Local Nature Reserve |  | Study area | Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation under S21 of the Countryside Act 1949 (UK Government, 1949) | Loss of a local amenity and green space for the local population |
|  | Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) |  | Study area (plus West Pit on opposite side of Lime Kiln Road) | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(UK Government, 1982) | The SSSI was designated in 1986 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, on the basis of the presence of 4 rare plants found on the site  The chalk grassland is dominated by the grass upright brome *Bromus erectus* and holds a number of the nationally rare plants as well as typical chalkland species such as wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria.*(Cherry Hinton Pit, 1986) |
| Birds | Sparrowhawk | Accipiter nisus | Site and surrounding area | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(UK Government, 1982) |  |
|  | Red Kite | Milvus milvus | Site and surrounding area | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(UK Government, 1982) |  |
|  | Buzzard | Buteo buteo | Site and surrounding area | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(UK Government, 1982) |  |
|  | Yellowhammer | Emberiza citrinella | Adjacent farmland | Red listed  Protected species NERC 2006 |  |
|  | Corn Bunting | Emberiza calandra | Adjacent farmland | Red listed  Protected species NERC 2006 |  |
|  | Mistle Thrush | Turdus viscivorus | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Starling | Sturnus vulgaris | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  Red listed |  |
|  | *Skylark* | Alaudia arvensis | Adjacent farmland | Red listed  Protected species NERC 2006  European Protected Species(The Birds Directive, 2022) |  |
|  | Song Thrush | Turdus philomelos | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Swift | Apus apus | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Bullfinch | Pyrrhula pyrrhula | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) | International responsibility |
|  | Linnet | Linaria cannabina | Site and surrounding area |  |  |
|  | Grey Patridge | Perdix perdix | Adjacent farmland | Red listed(Stanbury et al., 2021)  Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  European Protected Species  European Protected Species(The Birds Directive, 2022) |  |
|  | Kingfisher | Alcedo atthis | Cherry Hinton Brook | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  European Protected Species(The Birds Directive, 2022) |  |
|  | Stock Dove | Columba oenas | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  European Protected Species(The Birds Directive, 2022) |  |
|  | House Martin | Delichon urbicum | Site and surrounding area | Red listed(Stanbury et al., 2021) |  |
|  | Kestrel | Falco tinnunculus | Site and surrounding area | Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(UK Government, 1982) |  |
|  | Greenfinch | Chloris chloris | Site and surrounding area | Red listed(Stanbury et al., 2021) |  |
|  | House sparrow | Passer domesticus | Site and surrounding area | Red listed(Stanbury et al., 2021) |  |
|  | Hedge sparrow | Prunella modularis | Site and surrounding area | Red listed(Stanbury et al., 2021) | International responsibility |
|  | Herring gull | Larus argentatus subsp. argenteus | Site and surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) | International responsibility |
|  | Lapwing | Vanellus vanellus | Adjacent farmland | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
| Amphibian | Common Toad | Bufo bufo | Cherry Hinton Brook | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mammal | Water vole | Arvicola amphibius | Cherry Hinton Brook | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  Endangered (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021) |  |
|  | Badger | Meles meles | Site (possible) | Badger protection act 1992 (UK Government, 1992) |  |
|  | Hedgehog | Erinaceus europaeus | Site | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  Vulnerable (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021) |  |
| Bats | Noctule | Nyctalus noctula | Surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Pipistrelle | Pipistrellus pipistrellus | Surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Soprano Pipstrelle | Pipistrellus pygmaeus | Surrounding area | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
| Vascular Plants | Moon Carrot | Seseli libatonis | Site | Vulnerable species (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021) |  |
|  | Grape Hyacinth | Muscari neglectum | Site | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Cornflower | Centaurea cyanus | Site | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Basil thyme | Acinos arvensis | Site | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  | Perennial flax | Linum perenne ssp. anglicum | Site | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bryophytes | Chalk screw-moss | Tortula vahliana | Site (verges) | Protected species NERC 2006 (UK Government, 2006)  Vulnerable species (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021) | One of few sites in England where this can be found – developing the chalk pit would have significant impact |

# Scoping matrix

A scoping matrix sets out the potential impact of the development on the habitat and ecology of the site.(Environment Agency, 2003) This is summarised in Table 2, separating out the two parts of the development.

Table 3 *Scoping matrix for the development. The top section of each cell indicates the magnitude of the impact on a 3-point scale where 1 is the lowest and 3 the highest; the bottom section indicates the importance of the impact, again on a 3-point scale where 1 is low importance, and 3 high importance. Adapted from* (Environment Agency, 2003; Leopold et al., 1971)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Area of potential impact | Construction | | Post-construction | |
|  |  | *Chalk pit* | *Lime Kiln Close* | *Chalk pit* | *Lime Kiln Close* |
| Habitats | Deciduous woodland | 2 1 | 3 2 | 2 1 | 2 3 |
|  | Calcareous grassland | 3 2 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
| Mammals | Bats | 1 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 | 2 2 |
|  | Badger | 1 1 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 2 2 |
|  | Water vole | 1 2 | 1 1 | 1 2 | 1 1 |
| Amphibians | Great crested newt | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 |
| Birds | Protected species | 3 2 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
|  | Red-listed species | 3 2 | 1 1 | 3 2 | 1 1 |
| Flora | Vascular plants | 3 3 | 1 1 | 3 3 | 1 1 |
|  | Bryophytes | 3 3 | 1 1 | 3 3 | 1 1 |

* 1. Loss of habitat through development poses the greatest risk to the biodiversity of the site. Both deciduous woodland and calcareous grassland are protected habitats.
  2. The loss of woodland with a large number of mature trees would reduce nesting and roosting sites for bats and a range of woodland bird species including red-listed species like Greenfinch, Bullfinch and House Sparrow.
  3. The loss of the chalk grassland environment would threaten population of chalkland specialist plants and bryophytes like Grape Hyacinth and Chalk screw-moss.

# Recommendations

1. The site has considerable ecological and conservation value:
   1. It is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and SSSI
   2. Is dominated by deciduous woodland and calcareous grassland Priority Habitats,
   3. With confirmed presence or habitat suitability for a wide range of species including bats, protected mammals (especially badger and hedgehogs), and protected or red-listed bird species
   4. Has a distinct chalkland flora and a wide range of bryophytes, include some found in few other places
2. It also is of historic interest and provides amenity for dog-walkers and local people.
3. It is recommended that further survey work is undertaken as follows(Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities, 2022):
   1. A bat survey to assess the prevalence of bats in the area, the presence of any roosts and foraging routes. This should use methods set out by the Bat Conservation Trust.(Bat Conservation Trust, 2022)
   2. Badger survey using walk-over methods(Surveying Badgers (The Mammal Society), 2019)
   3. Breeding bird survey(Bird Survey Guidelines, 2022)
4. In addition, given the proximity to Cherry Hinton Brook and the potential for contamination it is also recommended that a water vole survey is undertaken to establish a baseline

## Mitigation and control

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre development | Demolition and Construction | Post development |
| Avoid | Retain e.g. grassland/ hedgerows/habitats  TPOs  Hedgehog surveys (post reptile fencing) | Protect with screening/ fencing |  |
| Mitigation | Bat survey  Provide alternate roost/ boxes  Works outside sensitive periods  Monitor  Reptile fencing  Badgers - setts under DEFRA licence | Soft-strip and monitor  Replacement roosts  No capture for 7 days  Watching brief  Searches for hedgehogs  Safe excavation works | Monitoring  Lighting  Permeable fencing |
| Compensate |  | New planting to encourage  Alternative badger setts  New planting |  |
| Enhance |  | Green infrastructure – roofs / walls  Sustainable drainage  Lighting schemes  Hedgerow infill  Refugia |  |

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# Annex

NBN atlas lists observations of 1044 distinct species within 2km of the Chalk Pits

### Table 4 Protected species observed within 2km of the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits (NBN Atlas, 2007)

| Common name | Scientific name | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Common Toad | Bufo bufo | 4 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 1 |
| Sparrowhawk | Accipiter nisus | 25 | 26 | 13 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 20 | 13 | 10 | 10 |
| Skylark | Alauda arvensis | 2 | 9 | 2 | 16 | 9 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Kingfisher | Alcedo atthis | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Swift | Apus apus | 3 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Stock Dove | Columba oenas | 5 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Yellowhammer | Emberiza citrinella | 3 | 6 | 0 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Kestrel | Falco tinnunculus | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Greenfinch | Chloris chloris | 47 | 38 | 28 | 36 | 32 | 30 | 25 | 26 | 17 | 27 |
| Linnet | Linaria cannabina | 2 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| House Martin | Delichon urbicum | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| House Sparrow | Passer domesticus | 38 | 33 | 17 | 26 | 22 | 16 | 23 | 18 | 18 | 16 |
| Grey Partridge | Perdix perdix | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Starling | Sturnus vulgaris | 43 | 44 | 34 | 36 | 37 | 33 | 36 | 34 | 32 | 31 |
| Redwing | Turdus iliacus | 9 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Buzzard | Buteo buteo | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Corn Bunting | Emberiza calandra | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Herring Gull | Larus argentatus | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Cetti’s Warbler | Cettia cetti | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Small Tortoiseshell | Aglais urticae | 4 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| Red Fox | Vulpes vulpes | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| West European Hedgehog | Erinaceus europaeus | 6 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 16 | 21 | 8 | 14 | 19 | 63 |
| Common Pipistrelle | Pipistrellus pipistrellus | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Pipistrelle | Pipistrellus pipistrellus | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| European Water Vole | Arvicola amphibius | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Soprano Pipistrelle | Pipistrellus pygmaeus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Noctule Bat | Nyctalus noctula | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

1. <https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000310798> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)