

#### **MACKELLAR-SCHWERDT ARCHITECTS**

Meridian Community Primary School, Roderick Avenue, Peacehaven

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report – Protected Species Assessment

Approved By	: Joe Jackson
Signed:	
Position:	Principal
Date:	07 <sup>th</sup> July 2016



Environmental Design



Landscape Planning

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Lizard Landscape Design

#### Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology



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#### SUMMARY

Mackellar Schwerdt Architects has commissioned Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology to undertake an ecological appraisal of the land and buildings found at Meridian Community Primary School, Roderick Avenue, Peacehaven *(Grid Reference: TQ 414 024– hereafter referred to as 'the site')*. A Preliminary Ecological Assessment *(PEA)* was undertaken of the site on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 to appraise the existing ecological resource within the site and the surrounding area.

This survey has identified habitats of amenity grassland; buildings; hardstanding; introduced shrub; and scattered trees and hedging to the site boundaries. Botanical interest on the site at the time of survey was very limited with the vast majority of the site area comprised of perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). The habitat in general is very uniform and lacks significant structural variation; a fact that will be reflected at higher trophic levels and the overall lack of biodiversity on the site. It is suggested therefore that the majority of the development site area should be considered of *'low ecological value'*.

The exception to this lies within the habitat area of which a small section is proposed to be removed to make way for additional car parking. Although the sward is of limited interest botanically, the rough grassland combined with areas of scrub, debris and compost piles is considered to provide optimum habitat for common species of reptile (*refer to Photograph No. 04– Appendix No. 01*). Habitat such as this is considered ideal for common widespread reptile species such as slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). It shall be necessary to conduct a full reptile survey consisting of 7 no. survey visits during the reptile active season (*March-June and September-October during temperatures of 9-18°C between the hours of 08:30-11:00 and 16:00-18:30 in periods of calm, sunny weather*).

The existing building on site was extensively examined and found to offer '*negligible*' bat roost potential. There were 3 no. potential ingress points noted however upon examination these were discounted due to the recent construction of the building, lack of open roof void, lack of signs of bat use such as droppings or grease marks, poor surrounding habitat and lack of connectivity via linear corridors to the wider environment. No further survey with regards to bats is recommended for this site.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mackellar Schwerdt Architects have commissioned Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology to undertake an ecological appraisal of the land and buildings found at Meridian Community Primary School, Roderick Avenue, Peacehaven (Grid Reference: TQ 414 024– hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.2 A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) was undertaken of the site on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 to appraise the existing ecological resource within the site and the surrounding area. The PEA was comprised of a baseline survey conforming broadly to the JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Survey protocol to identify the existing habitats. In addition a Protected Species Assessment was undertaken to identify potential for European and Nationally Protected Species within and adjacent to the site.
- 1.3 The field survey data and analysis contained within this report was undertaken and prepared by Catherine O'Reilly (*Project Ecologist; Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology*). The report has been reviewed by Mark Vivian (*BSc MSc MCIEEM; Technical Director of Ecology; Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology; Natural England Bat Licence Holder for Bats, GCN and Dormice*).

#### Site Information

- 1.4 The site is located in Peacehaven, to the east of Brighton in East Sussex. The site covers approximately 2.1 hectares and is approximately 62.00 metres above sealevel. No existing public rights of way exist across the site and permission has been sought to access the site.
- 1.5 The site is formed of an operational school premises and has been managed for this purpose with most of the land being buildings, hardstanding (sports court / playground) and amenity grassland (sports pitches and playing fields). The buildings and hardstanding surfaces are concentrated in the western and northern sectors of the site with sports pitches dominating the southern sector. The site is enclosed by secure fencing with scattered trees to all boundaries. The area internally is particularly open with scattered trees around existing buildings. There are no water bodies or woodland listed on *The National Inventory of Trees and Woodland* either within or adjacent to the site.

#### Surrounding Landscape

- 1.6 The surrounding landscape is suburban, with residential properties extending for at least 500.00 metres to the south and west. Open farmland, formed primarily of arable land extends to the northern and western aspects. There are no water bodies within 500.00 metres of the site boundaries.
- 1.7 The nearest area of woodland listed on the *National Inventory of Woodland and Trees* is a 2.58 hectare plot of shrub located 680.0 metres north-east. The nearest area listed as deciduous woodland is a 1.3 hectare plot 250.0 metres west of the site. Although there are small patches of woodland in the local vicinity the wider landscape is largely open with chalk downland dominating.

#### **Development Proposals**

1.8 The development proposals consist of the construction of an extension to the east of the existing school building, new car parking to the north-west and additional play areas to the south of the existing school building. The southern section of the site is to remain unaltered within current development proposals.

#### 2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

- 2.1 The aim of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey has been;
  - To identify and display the main habitat types and plant communities;
  - To provide a species list for the major habitats;
  - To identify habitats with potential for protected species; and;
  - To provide recommendations for surveys of protected species and / or ecological enhancement / compensation.
- 2.2 This report establishes the potential ecological resource within the site and outlines where any ecological constraints may occur.

#### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey was undertaken on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and the site subjected to a Phase 1 Habitat Survey using guidelines set out in the 'Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey a Technique for Environmental Audit' (JNCC, 2003). This has resulted in a Site Habitat Plan (Figure No. 1) and Target Notes in Table No. 1.0. Species Lists for Habitat Parcels have been included at Table No. 02.
- 3.2 Habitats within the site were classified and the presence, or potential presence, of certain protected and / or notable species of flora and fauna were identified. A summary description of the habitat within the site following the *Phase 1 Habitat Survey* methodology is presented in Section 4.0.
- 3.3 Due to the field survey consisting of only one site visit certain species, particularly some of the flowering plants, may not have been visible or may have been otherwise inconspicuous at the time of survey and hence overlooked. These are accepted constraints associated with the standard *Phase 1 Habitat Survey* methodology.
- 3.4 Habitats within and immediately adjacent to the site were assessed for their potential for uncommon and protected fauna including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. This involved identifying features, which may be used by protected species, potential foraging areas and other signs of use. Stones, dead wood, and rubble were turned over and any dug holes studied for recent activity by mammals. Water bodies were recorded wherever possible within 500.0 metres of the proposed development.
- 3.5 The results are summarised and accompanied in large part by photographic evidence contained in *Appendix No.1 Site Photographs*. Recommendations for further investigation and survey are made in the following report.

#### 4.0 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Desk Study – Background information

#### **Designated Sites and Habitats**

4.1.1 The following section outlines the ecological context of the development site, describing any designated nature conservation sites in the vicinity of the development site. The following designated sites and habitats are not necessarily representative of the existing site's ecology but are indicative of the ecological context of the surrounding area; a factor that may be important when assessing the presence / absence potential of certain species groups.

#### Statutory Protected Sites

4.1.2 Statutory Protected Sites within 2.0 kilometres of the site are listed below:

Name	Reason for Designation	Distance
South Downs	The area designated measures	320.0m E
National Park	approximately 1600km <sup>2</sup> and has been	
	classified because of the uniquely	
	biodiverse landscape that it represents, as	
	evidenced by the 86 no. Sites of Special	
	Scientific Interest within the boundary.	
Brighton and	One of 5 UNESCO Biosphere reserves in	Within
Lewes Downs	the UK, this 400km <sup>2</sup> area aims to serve	
Biosphere	as a world-class demonstration area of	
Reserve	how we might live in greater harmony with	
	our local environment by bringing people	
	and nature closer together.	
Brighton to	Designated initially for its geology however	1.6km S
Newhaven Cliffs	populations of rare flora and fauna are	
Site of Special	now acknowledged. The only known	
Scientific	breeding colony of Kittiwakes in Sussex is	
Interest	found here in addition to nationally rare	
	Coleoptera (Beetles) such as (Polistichus	
	connexus).	

4.1.3 The site is located within the *Impact Risk Zone (IRZ)* of Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs SSSI however the development proposals do not fall into the categories which require consultation with Natural England. The development proposals do not propose to remove or alter any *Statutory Protected Site*. Given the large intervening distances and the fact that proposals focus on areas of *'low ecological value'* the proposed construction is not considered to be detrimental to the above Statutory and Non-Statutory Protected Areas.

#### Non-Statutory Protected Sites

4.1.4 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) are non-statutory designations given to areas of high, local conservation value. Despite being non-statutory, SNCIs are still recognised by local planning authorities in their policies and plans. SNCI's located within 2.0km of the site are detailed below;

Name	Grid Ref	Reason for Designation Dis	
Halcombe Farm	TQ 422 030	An area of species-rich chalk grassland	850.0m
		and scrub on a south-facing	NE
		slope. Meadow Clary and Common	
		Gromwell are recorded from the site.	
Coombe Farm	TQ 394 033	Grazed chalk grassland, with notable	2.0km W
		species including Common spotted	
		Orchid and Chalk-hill Blue.	
Peacehaven	TQ 401 011	Unimproved chalk grassland, with a	1.7km
Grasslands		diverse flora and a number of	SW
Sites 1, 2 & 5		butterflies.	

4.1.5 The site is neither located within nor adjacent to any *Non-Statutory Designated Site*. The intervening distance and discrepancy between habitats suggest that the development proposals would not have an adverse effect upon any of the above sites.

#### UK Priority Habitat

4.1.6 Within 2.0 kilometres of the site there are *Priority Habitats of deciduous woodland*, lowland calcareous grassland, maritime cliff and slope, and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. The surrounding landscape is relatively open with little woodland in the vicinity; the only noteworthy area is a small area of scrub listed on *the National Inventory of Trees and Woodland* 680.0 kilometres north of the site.

#### 4.2 Field Survey

- 4.2.1 The following habitats and features were recorded within the development site and the extended survey area. The general site character has been described, along with dominant plant species, plants of high nature conservation value and a brief description of the habitat's physical characteristics. These are shown on the Site Habitat Plan in *Figure No. 1*.
- 4.2.2 Habitats within the development site area include:
  - Buildings;
  - Hardstanding;
  - Amenity Grassland;
  - Poor Semi-Improved Grassland;
  - Scattered Trees;

#### Site Description (Refer to Appendix No. 1 – Site Photographs)

- 4.2.3 The site is utilised as a primary school and as such is dominated by areas of building and hardstanding / bare ground. School buildings are concentrated to the north of the school site with car parking to the north-west while the southern section is formed largely of playing fields.
- 4.2.4 The building extension focuses on an area of hard standing and amenity grassland to the north-eastern aspect of the school site. The grassland which surrounds the hard play areas has a vegetative composition which is typical of amenity use with high levels of foot-traffic (*Refer to Photograph No. 02 Appendix No. 01*). Forbs present were typical of such a habitat including common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). A single species beech hedge separates this area from further hardstanding and playing fields to the south.

- 4.2.5 The playing fields have a marginally higher percentage of forbs however those present are still indicative of amenity use. The boundaries of the site are formed of secure fencing and hedge / scrub lines. The playing field is bordered to the west by a mixture of native and ornamental shrub planting with scattered trees to the south and east. An area of rough grassland / tall ruderal forms the south-western corner of the playing field.
- 4.2.6 The north-western portion of the site area is formed of car parking with a large habitat area beyond this to the west. The area is comprised in the mainstay by rough species-poor, semi-improved grassland (c. 30cm in length) with areas of shrub planting, hedging and tree lines (*Refer to Photograph No. 04 & 05 Appendix No. 01*). Numerous bunds have been constructed within the area to create discrete sections for outdoor learning. A greenhouse, 2 no. compost bins and small bug hotel formed of pallets are located to the south-western corner of this area. The habitat area is divided from the carpark by a series of wooden steps and introduced shrub planting.

#### Bat Roost Assessment

- 4.2.7 The main school building was inspected and was found to be of a modern construction with concrete tile roof (*Refer to Photograph No. 06 Appendix No. 01*). The roof was considered to be in good condition however 3 no. potential access points were located; 1 no. gap on the hip joint of the south-eastern aspect, 1 no. broken tile approximately 0.5 metres from the ridge and 1 no. gap caused by tile spread to the north-eastern aspect of the section of roof which is to be directly affected by building works (*Refer to Photograph No. 07 Appendix No. 01*). All soffits were tight-fitting and fascia were intact. The building appeared to be in a good state of repair with no other obvious points of ingress / egress noted.
- 4.2.8 An internal inspection of the building revealed the lack of an open roof void. The construction of the building is such that internal rooms fill much of the void with numerous Velux windows and sky lights throughout. An internal inspection allowed closer investigation of the potential bat roost features noted during the external inspection; no evidence of bats using these features was noted. All windowsills, ledges and windows were inspected for bat droppings / urine; no evidence of bats utilising the structure was noted. The building is considered to have '*negligible*' potential to support a bat roost.

4.2.9 2 no. portacabins are located on site. The northern portacabin is in good condition with no potential bat roost features noted (*Refer to Photograph No. 08 – Appendix No. 01*). The southern portacabin is of slightly older construction however all fascia and soffits were tightly fitting while the flat roof is not conducive to supporting a bat roost. The base skirting was missing to the eastern aspect; this area appeared to be being used by foxes at the time of the survey (*Refer to Photograph No. 10 – Appendix No. 01*).

#### 5.0 EVALUATION

- 5.1 This survey has identified habitats of amenity grassland; buildings; hardstanding; introduced shrub; and scattered trees and hedging to the site boundaries. Botanical interest on the site at the time of survey was very limited with the vast majority of the site area comprised of perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). The habitat in general is very uniform and lacks significant structural variation; a fact that will be reflected at higher trophic levels and the overall lack of biodiversity on the site. It is suggested therefore that the majority of the development site area should be considered of *'low ecological value'*.
- 5.2 The exception to this lies within the habitat area of which a small section to the south is proposed to be removed to make way for additional car parking. Although the sward is of limited interest botanically, the rough grassland combined with areas of scrub, debris and compost piles is considered to provide optimum habitat for common species of reptile (*refer to Photograph No. 05 Appendix No. 01*). Habitat such as this is considered ideal for common widespread reptile species such as Slow Worms (*Anguis fragilis*).
- 5.3 All UK reptile species are protected against killing, injury or sale under *The Wildlife* and *Countryside Act 1981*. Developments that could predictably kill or injure reptiles could result in an offence. Furthermore, all reptile species are listed as *Species of Principle Importance* under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*. It shall be necessary to conduct a full reptile survey prior to development followed by implementation of a mitigation strategy should reptiles be found.

- 5.4 The existing building on site was extensively examined and found to offer '*negligible*' bat roost potential. There were 3 no. potential ingress points noted however upon examination these were discounted due to the recent construction of the building, lack of open roof void, lack of signs of bat use such as droppings or grease marks, poor surrounding habitat and lack of connectivity via linear corridors to the wider environment.
- 5.5 The southern portacabin on the site was noted to have open access to the void below via missing skirting to the eastern corner. The void appeared to be in use by foxes at the time of the survey. All wild mammals are protected under *The Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996,* which states: '*If, save as permitted by this Act, any person mutilates, kicks, beats, nails or otherwise impales, stabs, burns, stones, crushes, drowns, drags or asphyxiates any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering he shall be guilty of an offence*'. Care should be taken during any demolition of this building to prevent entrapment or harm to any wild mammal.

#### 6.0 PROTECTED SPECIES – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Reptiles

6.1 Although the sward is of limited interest botanically, the habitat area with its rough grassland, areas of scrub and compost piles is considered to provide optimum habitat for common species of reptile. It shall be necessary to conduct a full reptile survey consisting of 7 no. visits during the reptile active season in suitable conditions (*March-June and September-October during temperatures of 9-18°C between the hours of 08:30-11:00 and 16:00-18:30 in periods of calm, sunny weather*).

#### Amphibians

6.2 No waterbodies were located on site or within a 500.00 metre radius. Terrestrial habitat on site is considered sub-optimal for a population of amphibian. No detailed amphibian surveys are recommended for this site.

#### Badger

6.3 The site was extensively searched for badger sett or field signs. Nothing to suggest the presence of badgers on site was noted. No detailed survey work with regard to badgers is required on site.

#### Bats

6.4 Buildings on site were extensively examined for any bat roost potential. The recent construction of the building, lack of open roof void, lack of signs of bat use such as droppings or grease marks, poor surrounding habitat and lack of connectivity via linear corridors to the wider environment negates any potential of the building. The buildings on site are therefore considered to have '*negligible*' bat roost potential. No further detailed bat surveys are recommended for this site.

#### Birds

6.5 Scattered trees and scrub on the site is considered to provide suitable nesting sites for a range of bird species. It is an offence under *Section 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* to intentionally take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built. It is advised that any work is undertaken outside the bird nesting season (*March-September inclusive*) or following careful inspection.

#### Dormice

6.6 No suitable habitat for this species was located on site during the survey assessment, therefore the presence of dormice are not a consideration on this site.

#### Otters, Water Voles, White-Clawed Crayfish

6.7 No suitable habitat for this species was located on site during the survey assessment, therefore the presence of otter are not a consideration on this site.

#### 7.0 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

- 7.1 The design of the proposed development should consider enhancements for the benefit of wildlife in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework and Local Planning Policy*. Recommendations for ecological enhancements that could be considered as part of development proposals could include;
  - The use of native tree and shrub species within the soft landscape proposals; suitable species may include common hazel – (Corylus avellana); pedunculate oak – (Quercus robur); hornbeam – (Carpinus betulus); and whitebeam – (Sorbus aria);
  - Creation of compost heaps and dead wood piles within the existing habitat area;
  - The use of flowering shrubs as listed within the RHS 'Perfect for Pollinators' plant list to provide year-round interest for invertebrates;
  - Seeding with native wildflower species to areas of bare ground within the habitat area post construction. Wildflower areas should be mown on an annual basis;
  - Provision of nesting boxes for a variety of bird species;
  - Provision of a hedgehog house within the remaining habitat area.

#### 8.0 **REFERENCES**

JNCC (2003) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit'. JNCC;

Mitchell-Jones and McLeish (2004) Bat Workers Manual – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. JNCC;

Streeter D (2010) The Most Complete Guide to the Flowers of Britain and Ireland. Harper Collins, London;

www.magic.gov.uk;

## Table No. 01 – Target Notes (TN) for Ecology Phase 1 Habitat Survey andProtected Species Assessment; Meridian Community Primary School,Roderick Avenue, Peacehaven

Target Note	Description	Protected Species	Potential	Photo No.
TN 01	Area of rough grassland which provides optimum reptile habitat.	Reptile	'Moderate'	05
TN 02	Location of compost piles which are a favoured site for reptile species such as slow worm.	Reptile	'Moderate'	04
TN 03	Area of the building to be directly impacted by proposed extension works.	Bats	'Negligible'	06
TN 04	Location of access point beneath the portacabin which appeared to be in use by foxes at the time of the survey.	Mammals	'Moderate/ High'	10
TN 05	Area of dense shrub / trees which may provide nesting opportunity for numerous bird species.	Breeding Birds	'Moderate/ High'	n/a

### Table No. 02 – Species Lists for Habitat ParcelsMeridian Community Primary School, Roderick Avenue, Peacehaven

#### Amenity Grassland

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Black Medick	Medicago lupulina	0
Common Yarrow	Achillea millefolium	0
Daisy	Bellis perennis	LA
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale	0
Fescue	Festuca spp.	LD
Mouse-ear Chickweed	Cerastium fontanum	0
Perennial Rye-grass	Lolium perenne	LD
Ribwort Plantain	Plantago lanceolata	F
Speedwell sp.	Veronica sp.	R
White Clover	Trifolium repens	0

#### Species-Poor Semi-Improved Grassland

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Bramble	Rubus fruticosus	0
Bristly Ox-tongue	Helminthotheca echioides	R
Broadleaf Plantain	Plantago major	LO
Cleavers	Galium aprine	LA
Clover sp.	Trifolium spp.	0
Cocks-foot	Dactylis glomerata	LD
Common Mallow	Malva sylvestris	R
Creeping Cinquefoil	Potentilla reptans	LO
Curly Dock	Rumex crispus	LA
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale	LF
Dovesfoot Cranesbill	Geranium molle	0
Fescue	Festuca spp.	LD
Groundsel	Senecio vulgaris	R
Hedge Bindweed	Calystegia sepium	LD
Nettle	Urtica dioica	LF
Perennial Rye-grass	Lolium perenne	LD
Ribwort Plantain	Plantago lanceolata	LO
Speedwell sp.	Veronica sp.	R
Spotted Medick	Medicago arabica	LO
Teasel	Dipsacus sylvestris	R
Yorkshire Fog	Holcus lanatus	LD

#### DAFOR SCALE

D – Dominant; A – Abundant; F – Frequent; O – Occasional; R – Rare; L – Locally.

#### Scattered Trees

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Alder	Alnus glutinosa	0
Ash	Fraxinus excelsior	0
Cherry	Prunus spp.	0
Goat Willow	Salix caprea	0
Hazel	Corylus avellana	LF
Pine	Pinus sp.	0
Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia	LF
White Willow	Salix alba	LD
Whitebeam	Sorbus alba	LF

#### Tree/Shrub Lines

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Ash	Fraxinus excelsior	LD
Goat Willow	Salix caprea	LD
White Willow	Salix alba	LD

#### DAFOR SCALE

D – Dominant; A – Abundant; F – Frequent; O – Occasional; R – Rare; L – Locally.

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Appendix No. 01 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Site Photographs



Photograph No. 01 - View across the site looking towards the main school buildings.



Photograph No. 02 - Proposed areas for building extension. This area is considered to be of *'low ecological value'*.



Photograph No. 03 - View of the existing car park which is proposed to be extended.



Photograph No. 04 - View of the habitat area to the north-western section of the site. This area offers *'moderate'* potential to support a population of slow worm.

MACKELLAR SCHWERT ARCHITECTS MERIDIAN COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, PEACEHAVEN PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL *LLD954.MeridianCommunityPrimary.PEA.Rev01.07.07.16* 



Photograph No. 05 - View of the habitat area to the north-western section of the site. This area offers *'moderate'* potential to support a population of slow worm.



Photograph No. 06 - Section of the building which is to be directly impacted by extension works.



Photograph No. 07 - 2 no. potential access points. Upon further internal inspection these access points were discounted.



Photograph No. 08 - Portacabin building which offer '*negligible*' bat roost potential.



Photograph No. 09 - Portacabin building which offer '*negligible*' bat roost potential.



Photograph No. 10 - Gap beneath the southern portacabin which it is believed was being utilised by foxes at the time of the survey.



# Figure No. 01 - Site Habitat Plan Meridian Community Primary School, Peacehaven

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