



# OTTERPOOL PARK

COUNTRYSIDE • CONNECTED • CREATIVE

---

## **ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY BRIEFING**

SEPTEMBER 2020

[www.otterpoolpark.org](http://www.otterpoolpark.org)

## INTRODUCTION

Otterpool Park will be a new community for the Folkestone & Hythe district, built on Garden Town principles. These principles include a pledge to deliver a development that:

*"...enhances the natural environment, providing a green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains."*

Source: [www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles)





# An overview

- Minimising the impact on the natural environment and providing a home to wildlife and nature is important at Otterpool Park.
- The development aims to increase biodiversity across the whole site by 20%, which will be achieved by:
  - Ensuring almost half the total area of Otterpool Park is green space. The retained green space includes playing fields, parks, allotments and habitat.
  - Ensuring continued support to habitats and biodiversity,
  - Protecting the most valuable of the site's rivers, ponds, hedgerows and woodland habitats and buffering them from other areas using features such as a river corridor and woodlands. Extensive survey work has identified which are the most valuable. New orchards may be established.
  - Protecting and creating new habitats including wetlands, ponds and areas of tree planting. Our research has identified the habitats and habits of species such as bats, owls, kingfishers, voles, badgers,
  - Integrating features that promote good air quality such as provision for electric vehicles and public transport into our plans.



## BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it aims to increase both the number of any species and the variety of species overall in future.

As well as protecting individual species, our approach includes increasing habitats that can develop their own ecosystems and be host to a wide range of species.

Otterpool Park aims to increase biodiversity across the whole site by **20%** that's double the emerging target of 10% set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for new developments across the UK.

# Mitigation approach

There are three levels to the approach that will be taken regarding ecology and biodiversity at Otterpool Park:

## LEVEL ONE

### AVOIDANCE

- Key areas will be retained to reduce the impact of development. The most important areas for many species will be protected.
- Agricultural land is generally of low ecological value, with the richest habitats being along watercourses, ponds, woods and hedgerows.
- Buffer zones will be created or protected. These features, including woodland, hedgerows, tree planting, grasslands and a river corridor, will help to safeguard and enhance key existing and new habitat areas.
- Links between new and existing habitats will provide corridors for wildlife species. These will also support the new community - from drainage ditches to foot and cycle paths.



## LEVEL TWO

### MITIGATION

- The key areas for species have been identified. Where avoidance measures are not possible steps will be taken to reduce the impact of development by providing new habitats and links to them.
- Routes through the site for various species have been considered including water voles, badgers and dark corridors for bats.
- Retained bunds, woodland and vegetation will also ensure biodiversity is protected as much as possible. Crossing points for wildlife are also proposed.



## LEVEL THREE

### COMPENSATION

- This stage would be used to off-set any unavoidable impact on ecology and biodiversity.

# Survey information and mitigation

Survey work began on site in 2016, and the most recent updates have taken place in Spring 2020.



## **DESIGNATED SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs)**

Otterpool Quarry is the only SSSI within the planning application area and will be protected. It is protected for its geological interest. Care will also be taken to ensure the development does not detract from Lypne Escarpment to the west of the development site.



## **ANCIENT WOODLANDS**

There are no ancient woodlands within the development boundary site of Otterpool Park.

However there are several existing woodlands surrounding the planning application area, including; Harringe Brooks Wood, Sellindge; Folks Wood, Pedlinge; Chesterfield Wood, Sandling Park; Brockhill Country Park, Saltwood and woodland/pasture below Court-at-Street, Lypne will remain. Providing ecological corridors to these areas is an important part of the strategy.





## SURVEY INFORMATION AND MITIGATION

### DEDICATED SPECIES SURVEYS



#### BATS

A series of surveys have assessed the bat population in the planning application area.

##### **Transect surveys –**

These give information on the path or route where bats have been observed – five transects were defined which cross the initial Study Area, surveys conducted once a month at dawn or dusk.

##### **Bat static surveys –**

These monitor the presence of bats – fifteen static positions were identified, with three per transect. Acoustic monitoring equipment was positioned in each location for a minimum of five nights a month.

##### **External building assessments –**

These check for potential bat roosting sites. Buildings which will be removed or have a large proportion of the surrounding green infrastructure removed as part of the scheme were assessed.

**Bat emergence surveys on buildings –** Buildings with moderate or high potential for bat roosting that had the potential to be significantly affected were surveyed.

Nine species were identified – the vast majority were common or soprano pipistrelle bats. Some rarer and / or less recorded bats were identified, and areas of the site important for these species were identified.

125 buildings were assessed for bat roosting potential, of which 13 probable roosts and three possible roosts were identified.

##### **Mitigation**

These use devices that monitor the presence of bats and other species.



#### OTTERS

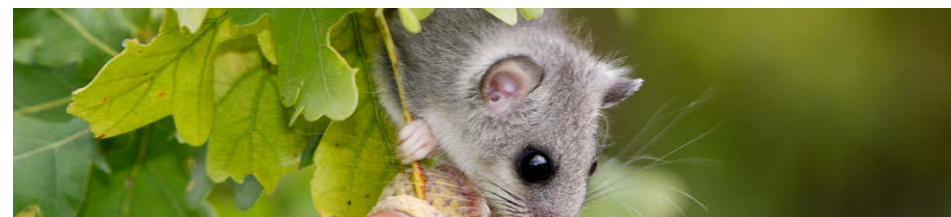
A number of surveys have taken place including six over the course of 2017 and 2018. The last survey took place earlier this year.

The surveys suggest no permanent otter population at the site. Evidence of only one otter has been picked up in the work to date,

suggesting it was a temporary visitor.

##### **Mitigation**

Habitats that are suitable for use by otters will be retained.



#### DORMICE

Surveys were undertaken in 2017, 2018 and updated in 2020. Dormice are not present on the site.

##### **Mitigation**

Buffers between residential areas and Harringe Brooks Woods will protect existing dormice populations off site, as well as retention and creation of hedgerows.

## SURVEY INFORMATION AND MITIGATION

### DEDICATED SPECIES SURVEYS



#### BADGERS

A number of surveys have taken place since Spring 2017, which have continued up to the present day. Signs of badger activity are observed and recorded.

103 badger setts were recorded. The surveys have found the number of main setts is higher than the average density for

similar habitats in the UK – 18. Every badger clan has one main sett, which is used for breeding.

#### Mitigation

The majority of setts are retained with links between them kept or enhanced. Some replacement setts could also be created.



#### GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Surveys of the site related to the presence of great crested newts began in March 2017 and were updated in Spring 2020. Great crested newts were found in eight ponds – all of which had a low population, except one which is considered to have medium population – Barrow Hill Farm pond.

#### Mitigation

A large number of ponds will be created at Otterpool Park, one will be lost. During construction, sensitive areas will be buffered and places of shelter will be created. Tunnels and gully pots will provide protection from road traffic.



#### REPTILES

Ten reptile surveys of suitable habitats on site were carried out between May and September 2017, which were updated this Spring. Three common species were recorded – lizard, grass snake and slow worm.

#### Mitigation

Planting, landscaping, new habitats and retention of existing features will ensure sufficient space for reptiles to thrive.

## SURVEY INFORMATION AND MITIGATION

### DEDICATED SPECIES SURVEYS



#### BIRDS

Wintering bird surveys took place over the Winter 2016-2017 and again in 2019. Breeding bird surveys were carried out in Spring 2017 and updated this Spring.

The number of protected species of birds, categorised as Schedule 1 birds, recorded on site are low, with only one confirmed breeding pair on site during survey work to date.

The species of Schedule 1 birds identified in survey work to date, include: black red start, brambling, fieldfare, kingfisher, mediterranean gull, merlin, red kite, red-legged partridge and redwing.

The number of protected species, categorised as red list birds, are widespread on the site, but with low numbers of confirmed breeding pairs according to surveys carried out to date.

The number of protected species, categorised as red List birds, identified in surveys to date, include

black redstart, fieldfare, grey wagtail, herring gull, house sparrow, lesser redpoll, linnet, merlin, mistle thrush, redwing, ringed plover, skylark, song thrush, starling, turtle dove and yellow wagtail.

**Schedule 1 birds** - All birds are protected in some form, but some species have additional protection during the breeding season, as do their nests, eggs and young. Special licences are needed for any activity that would disturb nesting sites during this period.

**UK Red List for Birds** - These are birds that are considered the most endangered in UK. The list is updated on a regular basis.

#### Mitigation

Existing habitats will be retained and new ones created. Some off site measures will be required to mitigate for any impact on farmland birds. This will be the subject of more detailed actions, subject to planning approval.



#### WATER VOLES

A number of surveys have taken place since Spring 2017. These have been followed further monitoring in Autumn 2017, Spring 2018 and Spring 2020.

The surveys have found numbers of water voles to be low or absent with the population concentrated in a few areas.

#### Mitigation

Areas with the highest water vole populations have less shading and dense vegetation, including retained riverbanks and streams. New series of ponds among measures proposed.





# OTTERPOOL PARK

COUNTRYSIDE • CONNECTED • CREATIVE