Land at Bungay Road, Poringland, NR14 7ST

27.11.2018

Ecology Summary

The land parcel at Bungay Road is to the northern edge of the B1332 Bungay Road. The site's boundaries follow historical field boundaries apart from a now non-existent access track from Bungay Road that once entered the site from the south of dwellings on the B1332 (British History Online, accessed 19 Nov 2018). The B1332 is the main approach road to Poringland from the south and heads north through the large village to Norwich 8km to the north.

A design team meeting was carried out on the 15 November 2018 to discuss the landscape and ecology issues and how best to approach the site as additional housing provision for the village of Porlingland.

Protected sites

There are no statutory protected sites within 2km.

Habitats

The site comprises mainly improved grassland managed as cattle pasture, and shows evidence of improvement and herbicide application.

The centre of the site contains a pond which appears to have been dry for a prolonged period of time, which is surrounded by scrub including hawthorn and goat willow, which could be remnants of old hedgerows. A group of mature willow trees are located along the northern extent of the beck, on the site boundary. Small areas of bramble scrub are also located in this area.

Along the eastern boundary of the site lies Well Beck on lower ground. The watercourse was slow flowing at the time of survey and the two channels are clogged leading to marshy land. Rushes are abundant in this area.

A species-poor hedgerow of blackthorn and hawthorn runs along the southern boundary of the site.

Scattered scrub and tree planting borders the north of the site.

Mature oak trees line the north-eastern boundary of the site, opposite Well Beck.

Protected species

Great crested newts ("GCN")

The pond on site is unsuitable as GCN breeding habitat but the site grassland habitats are suitable terrestrial habitat for this species. Four offsite ponds are located within 500m and these would need to be assessed for GCN habitat suitability, to inform appropriate mitigation.

Bats

Bats may forage across the grassland habitat on site and along the hedgerow and tree edge habitats. No bat roosting features appeared to be present on site, except for some roosting potential in the mature oak trees on the north-western boundary.

Badgers

No signs of badger presence or setts were in evidence.

Reptiles

The wet habitat along the beck may be used by grass snakes, but the site interior is considered too uniformly grazed to be used by reptiles.

Otters and water voles

The beck is considered too shallow for use by these species.

Breeding birds

The marginal hedgerow, scrub and tree habitats would provide nesting opportunities for birds but the interior of the site is considered too enclosed and disturbed by livestock to be used by skylarks.

Design constraints and opportunities for ecology

The features of highest ecological value that need to be retained are the boundary hedgerows and trees, the central dry pond, and the wet habitats along the beck.

Connectivity between features need to be retained to link the dry pond to the wetland habitat, by creating an ecology zone between these features, enhanced with planting. There is an opportunity to restore the dry pond by desilting and to hold water, which could act as attenuation for the development. The remnants of historic hedgerows along the pond could be extended to provide additional habitat for nesting birds, and foraging and commuting bats.

Well Beck could also be restored through management to improve its habitat value, and a buffer zone along the beck could be lightly managed to improve its biodiversity value as wetland.

The grassland in the south-eastern corner of the site is proposed to remain undeveloped and could be enhanced for biodiversity through increasing species-richness and sympathetic management.

Additional screening planting along the south-western road boundary and rear gardens of dwellings on Bungay Road could provide additional bird breeding habitat and foraging and commuting habitat for bats.