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Your Ref:  
Our Ref:           P3309/13

Dear Lisa

**ROESHOT, HAMPSHIRE - SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE (SANG)  
SUMMARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

Background

The ecological assessment involved a field survey of the site to assess the value of habitats present and the potential for the site to support protected species. The habitat survey was carried out in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC) standard Phase 1 habitat survey methods; this allows the categorisation of all habitat types on site to a standard descriptor and allows the assessment of the value of those habitat types present. The protected species survey was aimed at assessing the potential for the site to support protected species.

As part of the adjacent Christchurch mineral extraction proposals, a large percentage of the SANG site has been assessed by ECOSA over a long period of time with ecological survey work taking place in 2008 and 2013.

Habitats

The habitats present on the site with potential to be incorporated into a SANG are dominated by expanses of heavily managed, species-poor agricultural land. There is a mixture of arable and pastoral fields dissected by mainly defunct species poor hedgerows (**Figure 1**). Small sections of well-developed hedgerow that have greater species diversity are rare but not completely absent. The agricultural land on site is of low ecological value and is suitable for enhancement through the SANG process.



**Figure 1** Typical Farmland Habitat Within SANG Area

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Invertebrate, Bird, Mammal, Reptile, Amphibian and Botanical Surveys  
Management Plans • Habitat Appraisal • Marine • NVC • EclA

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A small area of wood pasture is present in the eastern area of the proposed SANG which is currently used for horse grazing. This area is adjacent to a north-south aligned public footpath that provides a link between the A35 to the south, to Burton Common Site of Species Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The area with the highest inherent value on site is the River Mude which flows through the centre of the area proposed as a SANG. A small tributary of the River Mude also runs from east to west through the SANG originating along the western edge of Burton Common. Both of these features have the potential to be enhanced as part of the SANG proposals.

### Protected Species

#### Bats

Transects that incorporated part of the land proposed for the SANG completed in 2008 and 2013 recorded a small number of bat species including common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri* and an unidentified *Myotis* species. Not all areas of the proposed SANG were surveyed but based on the similarity of the habitats present in the remaining areas it is unlikely that a significantly different assemblage of species would be recorded elsewhere.

There are a number of veteran trees within the SANG area that have the potential to support roosting bats. These trees will not be affected as part of the works.

#### Badger

No evidence of badger setts were recorded from the proposed SANG area during the site walkover. The nearest known badger sett is on the eastern edge of Burton Common. The site itself provides suitable foraging for badger along the boundaries of the hedgerows and within the pasture. The wood pasture in the east of the site provides suitable habitat for a sett to develop.

#### Dormouse

Dormouse were recorded in Burton Rough, a woodland block to the north of the proposed SANG area. This area is beyond the proposals for a gravel working site and would not be readily accessible from the SANG area. The hedgerows present within the SANG area are mostly species poor and defunct providing little opportunity for this species.

#### Water Vole and Otter

Evidence of otter in the form of scats was recorded during the winter of 2012/2013 on the River Mude. No evidence of holts or other breeding signs were recorded. It is suggested that enhancements made to the site through the SANG process would be beneficial to this species. No records or evidence of water vole were recorded on the River Mude in 2008 or 2013.

#### Reptiles

Only a small area of the proposed SANG is known to hold reptiles. Slow-worm were recorded along the eastern end of the gravelled track between Burton Common and the River Mude. This area held a wider variety of reptile species during 2008 but during the winter of 2013 the ditch along the edge of the track was dredged to prevent flooding the arable fields.

Designing the SANG sympathetically for reptiles would allow their populations to increase on site. This would involve increasing the habitat complexity on site and providing areas of rough grassland and scrub. Increasing the area of semi-natural habitat adjacent to the River Mude would provide the best opportunity for provision of quality reptile habitat on site.

#### Breeding Birds

Breeding birds recorded on the site were recorded from the hedgerows and included species such as dunnock *Prunella modularis*, yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and song thrush *Turdus philomelos*. A small number of skylark *Alauda arvensis* were also recorded from the area and a single pair of lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* raised chicks in one of the arable fields within the SANG area during 2013.

Breeding birds are likely to be present within the site, and a number of bird species were recorded on-site during the survey. It is recommended that vegetation clearance works are undertaken outside the breeding bird season, which runs from March to August, inclusive. If this is not possible then the works should be carried out under an ecological watching brief, in order to check vegetation for nests.

Disturbance to lapwing and skylark are likely to be an important factor in determining whether these species are able to continue to breed within or adjacent to the SANG area. It may be necessary to enhance areas of the SANG to provide suitable alternative, less disturbed habitat for this species. With regards to lapwing there are potential breeding areas for the species in the surrounding farmland that should remain intact. The enhancement of the SANG could provide suitable alternative feeding habitat for this species.

#### Invertebrates

The River Mude is known to hold a population of southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale* a Red Data Book species also listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Although the species was not recorded during the surveys, potential enhancements to the River Mude and small stream flowing across the SANG area could provide better habitat for this species.

#### Suitability of site for SANG and Recommendations

The SANG areas proposed provide a range of opportunities to enhance the habitat and species diversity whilst still providing a suitable area for recreation. Potential enhancement measures could include:

- Improving connectivity of hedgerows through hedgerow creation and filling in gaps;
- More sympathetic management of hedgerows through fencing to allow them to widen and a pruning regime on a two year cycle;
- Incorporation of extended field buffers;
- Planting of nectar and pollen mixes in remaining fields on site;
- Providing beetle banks into retained areas to enhance site for invertebrates; and
- Preventing fly-tipping on site, especially within the River Mude.

An area that should be looked at in detailed should be potential enhancements to the small stream that flows into the River Mude from Burton Common. If possible this feature should be enhanced to increase its ecological value. Potential mechanisms for this could include creating of less linear path for this feature and reinstatement of a bank on the southern side of the stream.

#### Impact on Statutory Sites

The proximity of Burton Common SSSI to the potential SANG could potentially increase the usage of this site through spillage of users of the SANG onto the heathland. A suggested method of preventing this would be to utilise the haulage track for the proposed mineral extraction to the north of the SANG as a barrier. This could cut across the site severing the SANG from the SSSI without damaging the integrity of either.

#### Summary

Given the poor quality of the habitat on site no further Phase 2 surveys are recommended. A habitat management plan for the SANG area should be composed and agreed with the Local Planning Authority as part of its implementation. Following the development of the SANG monitoring should be carried out at the site and on adjacent land not enhanced to assess the impact of the works.

We hope that the above is to your satisfaction. In the meantime if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely  
**ECOSA Limited**



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