

Land at Coldmeece

The subject site comprises part of the former MOD and government Royal Ordnance Filling Factory built circa 1939. The subject site provided the firing test ranges for the munitions produced at the Ordnance facility.

The land associated with the firing range use still today hosts operational equipment such as narrow gauge rail lines for safe carriage of explosives, roads and tracks, range segregation walls, bomb proof shelters, man-made earth bunds, store buildings and observation offices that provided the necessary shelter for monitoring and analysis of accuracy and effect of the munitions.

The subject site is also hosts the remnants of the rail line built by London Midland and Scottish Railway company to transport circa 18,500 workers daily to the meet the needs of the war effort at the Coldmeece facility. Coldmeece had its own railway station to replace a former set down on what is now the West Coast Main Line. Although no longer operational, some remnants of the platform set down remain today.

The firing range component of the munitions factory was still in active use during the Falkland's conflict between 1980 and 1982 providing an essential munitions testing facility.

The firing range was eventually decommissioned by the MOD in 1987, after which it was disposed of as a surplus asset by the MOD.

The significant effects of the operational development and remnants of infrastructure and buildings and have demonstrably **NOT** blended into the landscape in the process of time due to the specific nature of construction being of military specification.

The land falls within the Brownfield definition. This is also confirmed by the notation on the National Land Use Database (Ref - 342.500.040). The site also has no overriding environmental classification or designation, nor is there any major environmental constraints that preclude its redevelopment.

The Baden Hall Estate acquired the land in 1994 and, to date, significant development has taken place on the site and within the nearby surrounding area.

The site is in now single the ownership and control of the Baden Hall Estate and is demonstrably developable, deliverable and viable as mixed use development.

It is approximately 36 hectares gross area, with defined brownfield footprints, low-grade grazing land, bunds, planted areas and the Meece Brook. Access is via the Meece Road, which has just been significantly upgraded in the direction of Stone through the WCML major works.

By way of context the attached plan identifies the areas that have been developed on the former MOD site and within the immediate locality.

Land uses within the former MOD Site

I. Sand and gravel extraction.

These quarrying operations have taken place since the late 1980's whereby permission to extract over 2 million tonnes of high grade sand and gravel has been worked. The aggregates have supplied the construction industry whilst the associated spoil was used in the major expansion and upgrade to the strategic highway improvements delivered at Stoke-on Trent on the A500 improvements.

A further 0.5 million tonnes of sand and gravel reserves remain to be won on the Baden Hall estate and it is a realistic prospect that any development to take place on the subject site would have this resource at its disposal. This reinforces the sustainability of this redevelopment of regeneration opportunity. Whilst not unique, it must be recognised that for a development site to have the ability to substantially reduce the need for importation of essential building materials is somewhat rare.

II. 12 no – approximately 100 acres of Fishing Lakes

The reclamation of the quarrying and aggregate extraction offered the opportunity to deliver a major recreational facility that is now regionally and nationally renowned. It caters for both abled bodied and disabled people involved in the country's largest recreational pursuit. It also has secured significant net gains in biodiversity due to the land owner's sensitive approach to land management.

III. Conference and Hospitality Complex

Part of the former farm barn complex has been converted and refurbished to give a large space ideal for conferences, weddings, private functions and corporate team building. The facility seats 350 guests and represents a successful example of rural enterprise.

IV. Midlands Police Firing Ranges

The redundant MOD firing ranges have in more recent times been leased on temporary basis by the police for regular fire arms training.

V. Motor sports

The subject site presently hosts approximately 6 motor sport events per annum comprising motorcycles, 4x4 and off-road vehicles utilising the site.

VI. Eccleshall Rugby Union Club

Eccleshall Rugby Union Club relocated to its new home at Baden Hall in 1991. The move enabled the club to substantially increase its membership which now provides rugby for juniors as early as under 7's up to a veteran's team. 11 different age cohorts are catered for in total. This is an extremely valuable community asset providing match pitches and training facilities that not only provides for sport but is also a community social hub. This use is also hosted at the Baden Hall site.

VII. Recreational Caravan Park

The subject site has extant planning permission for a recreational caravan park. This use directly compliments the fishing lakes recreation resource, offers greater access to the countryside and will assist in supporting and enhancing the local economy. As the destination becomes established it will serve to support the council's ambitions for promoting tourism within the Borough.

VIII. Motor Vehicle Test Station

Since WW2 de-commissioning part of the former firing range was used as a Government HGV vehicle testing, preparation and maintenance facility. That use has also now ceased and the site is capable of integration with subject site.

IX. Mixed commercial farming

The Baden Hall Estate farm remains an active and viable farm producing a variety of crops over a 400 acre area. The farm is involved in an environmental stewardship plan that involves setting aside field margins and planting with native grasslands to secure for biodiversity improvements. The redevelopment of the subject site would have no adverse impact on the future viability of the farmstead.

Land uses within the locality of the former MOD Site

The subject site is located at the settlement of Coldmece. It is important to understand land use context surrounding the immediate environs of Coldmece.

The attached plan also shows the surrounding land uses, particularly employment locations that are located within close proximity to the subject site.

X. **A. GRS – Motor Vehicle Specialists.**

GRS is a specialist motor vehicle sales and remarketing company. Their Coldmeece site physically adjoins the subject site and is circa 12.5ha (circa 30acres). The use involves vehicle repairs, service, pre-sale preparation and distribution across throughout UK.

B. Coldmeece Estate

The estate occupies a circa 10ha and host several large scale companies that are noted below.

XI. Carrs Billington – Agricultural Supplies

Carrs Billington Agriculture supplies the farming and rural communities with a comprehensive range of agricultural products and services.

XII. Global Group – HeatTransfer Systems

Global Group are a specialist manufacturer of heat transfer and thermal fluid systems that provide manufactures with specialist solutions for heat management use in manufacturing and production. They operate across Europe and internationally.

XIII. Morgan Sindall – Construction and Regeneration Group

Morgan Sindall is involved in the construction and regeneration industry. They employ around 5,700 people, working on everything from small scale fit outs and utilities projects to major urban regeneration schemes.

C. Brookside Business Park – Coldmeece

The Brookside Business Park occupies a circa 8.5ha and is principally occupied by ABC Packing, with other small businesses.

XIV. ABC Packaging

ABC packaging is a specialist design and manufacturing business creating bespoke packaging solutions for UK and worldwide distribution.

D. Raleigh Hall Business Park – Coldmeece

Raleigh Hall Business Park occupies a circa 115ha and is occupied by range of business and commercial enterprises ranging from manufacturing to storage and distribution. Permitted access improvements will lead to a proposed 4ha extension.



E. British Telecom – Yarnfield

The British Telecom built, 'Yarnfield Park' occupies circa 5.5ha and is regarded as a leading training venue and conference centre in the heart of the UK. The facility has diversified beyond the original BT remit to now host training events to assist small, large and international companies fulfil their training and conference needs. It also has extensive overnight accommodation. The facility also hosts a local sports centre open to the public.



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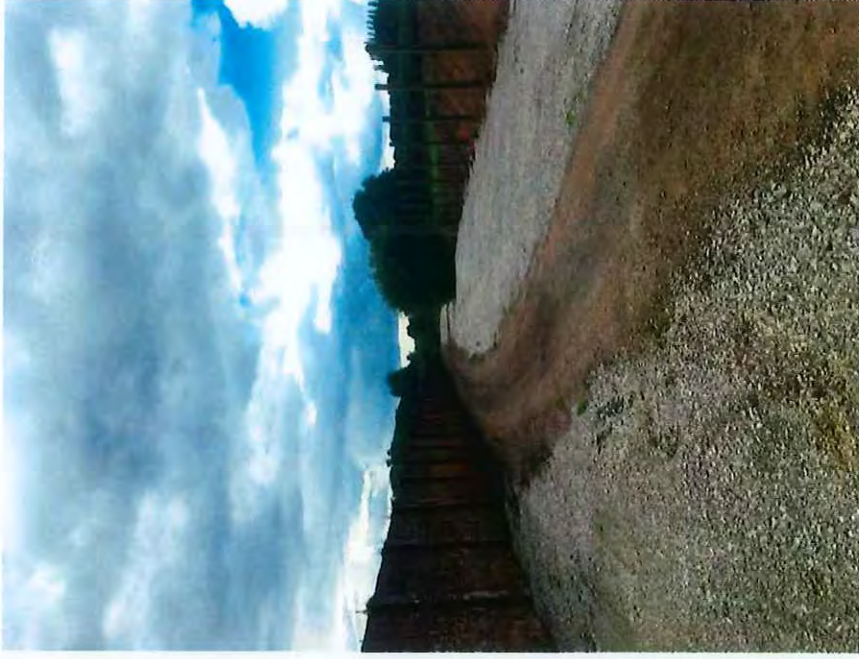




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GRS



Baden Hall Enterprises Ltd
Land at Cold Meece: Stafford Borough

ECOLOGY SUMMARY

15th July 2016

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION..... 2

2.0 STATUTORY SITES..... 2

3.0 HABITATS 2

4.0 SPECIES 3

5.0 BIODIVERSITY RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT 3

6.0 SUMMARY 4

FIGURES

Figure 1: Statutory Designated Sites

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following ecological summary has been produced by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd and is based on a site visit carried out in July 2016 and a review of statutory sites within the local area.

2.0 STATUTORY SITES

- 2.1 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website¹ was consulted for the location of statutory sites including the following:
- Sites of international importance within 5km including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar Sites
 - Sites of national importance within 2km including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves
 - Sites of local importance within 1km including Local Nature Reserves
- 2.2 There are no statutorily designated sites located within or adjacent to the site or within the distances stated above. The nearest site of international importance, the Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar Site and SSSI, is located to the west just beyond the 5km zone of influence (Figure 1).

3.0 HABITATS

- 3.1 The site is dominated by substantial areas of hardstanding and remnants of the former MOD Firing ranges. These areas are interspersed with areas of deciduous woodland and grassland habitats with the Meece Brook running through the centre of the site and a pond located in the north east in an area of deciduous woodland.
- 3.2 The woodland habitats present within the site are mainly deciduous with species present including ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. The woodland area is largely unmanaged.
- 3.3 A single area of coniferous plantation is located towards the northern end of the site. This area is dominated by Scott's pine *Pinus sylvestris* with a poorly developed ground flora present. This area of woodland was bounded by a strip of hawthorn and ash.
- 3.4 Large expanses of grassland are present within the site, located between areas of woodland and firing ranges, these had been cut at the time of survey but appeared to be species poor semi-improved grassland including perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and black knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.
- 3.5 Small areas of more species rich grassland were present on more nutrient poor substrates and included bird's foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, hop trefoil *Trifolium dubium* and selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*. Such areas are limited due to regular management of the site.

¹ <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

- 3.6 Areas of coarse unmanaged grassland dominated by false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* are present on the bunds bounding the site and the rifle ranges. Other species present included creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and common nettle *Urtica dioica*.
- 3.7 The Meece Brook runs through the bottom third of the site. This is slow flowing and heavily overshadowed with scrubs and trees, marginal species recorded included greater willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. Trees and shrubs included alder *Alnus glutinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and elder *Sambucus nigra*.
- 3.8 Two ponds are shown to be present on the Ordnance survey 1:25000. The pond shown to be located in the north west of the site is no longer present. The second lying to the north east within an area of deciduous woodland was not assessed during the site visit.
- 3.9 Areas of hardstanding and associated infrastructure associated with the MOD use are substantial and have been maintained and were generally clear of colonising ruderal and ephemeral short perennial vegetation.

4.0 SPECIES

- 4.1 The brick buildings located at the end of the rifle ranges provide potential for use by roosting bats and the habitats within the site including the brook and areas of woodland provide potential foraging and commuting habitats. Some of the more mature oaks within the areas of woodland provide features that could be used by roosting bats.
- 4.2 The site provides suitable habitat for use by badger *Meles meles* including potential areas for foraging and sett creation although no evidence of this species was recorded during the initial site visit.
- 4.3 The on-site pond could provide suitable habitat for use by great crested newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* although this was not assessed during the visit. The site is surrounded by 11 fishing ponds of almost 100 acres in scale that are well stocked with Carp and Tench for both competition and recreational fishing making them unsuitable for use by great crested newts. Any evidence and thereafter requirement to relocate any GCN could quite capably be achieved on site within the near locality of the existing pond.
- 4.4 On site areas of the brook appear too overshadowed to be used by water vole *Arvicola amphibius* but could be used as a commuting corridor by otter *Lutra lutra* should they be present within the local area.
- 4.5 The site provides some limited potential for reptiles such as grass snake associated with the unmanaged grassland on the bunds.

5.0 BIODIVERSITY RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 5.1 The habitats of greatest value within the site include the deciduous woodland, pond, brook and areas of more species rich grassland. When producing a development brief and framework plan for the site a full suite of ecological survey work will be conducted to ensure a complete understanding of the value of the site. Given the size of the site all future proposals will ensure that the areas of greatest value within the site are retained and enhanced. This will include retention of areas of deciduous woodland and enhancement through implementation of a long

term management plan including some opening up of the canopy and diversification of the edge habitats such as grading down and scalloping of edges through additional locally appropriate native shrub planting.

- 5.2 The brook corridor will be enhanced by removing some overhanging trees and shrubs to decrease overshading and creation of a more diverse grassland habitats adjacent incorporating areas of marshy grassland and open water where feasible.
- 5.3 Bird and bat boxes will be erected within retained areas of woodland and a long term management plan will ensure habitats within the site are managed to maximise their biodiversity potential.
- 5.4 Should protected species such as great crested newts or grass snake be recorded using the site, mitigation will be provided. The site is of a size that will enable sufficient suitable habitat to be retained and enhanced for such species.
- 5.5 The site would appear to have limited ecological interest, which can be easily increased by enhancement and management in tandem with any development proposals.

6.0 SUMMARY

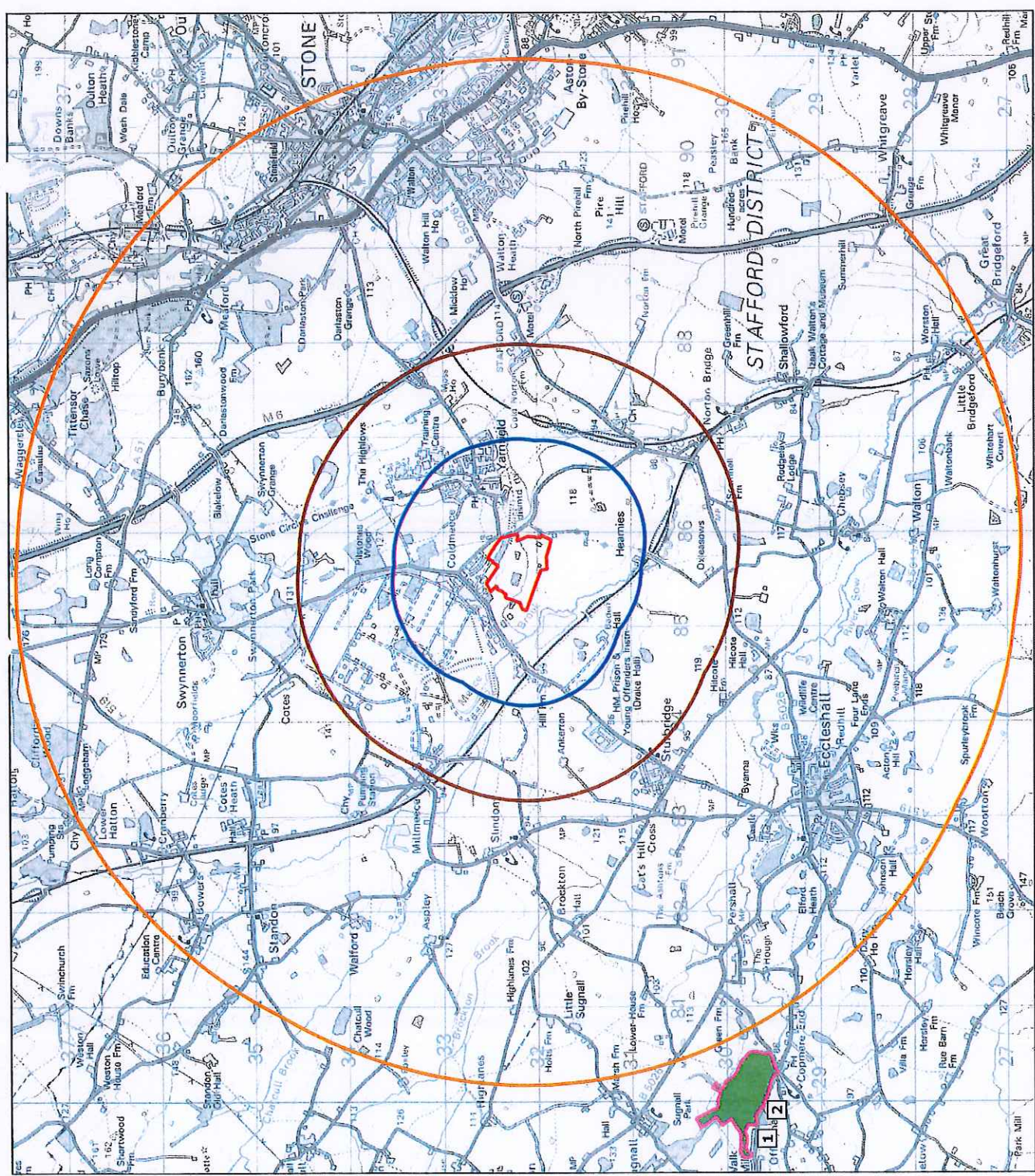
- 6.1 There are no statutory sites within or adjacent to the site, no sites of international importance within 5km and no sites of national importance within 2km.
- 6.2 This initial assessment of the site indicates that the majority of habitats are of low diversity with only common and widespread species present.
- 6.3 Habitats of greatest value include the areas of deciduous woodland, the pond, brook and areas of more diverse grassland.
- 6.4 The site provides potential habitat for great crested newts, badger, otter reptiles and bats, which will be fully assessed going forward.
- 6.5 Prior to submission of any detailed proposals a full suite of ecological surveys will be undertaken to inform a development framework plan.
- 6.6 The site is of sufficient size to ensure that the areas of greatest value can be maintained and should any protected species be present that these can be suitably mitigated for and populations retained at a favourable conservation status and enhanced.
- 6.7 Implementation of a long term management plan together with well-designed habitat creation and enhancement proposals in tandem with development of this predominantly brownfield site would ensure considerable biodiversity gains for this site and overall environmental enhancement which could reinforce local distinctiveness.
- 6.8 The area proposed for development is not considered to be an area of acknowledged ecological importance that would preclude the principle of development.


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Key

- Site Boundary
- 1km Buffer
- 2km Buffer
- 5km Buffer
- RAMSAR Site
- Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI

- 1 - Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 RAMSAR
- 2 - Cop Mere SSSI






 Wardall Armstrong
 Land at Coldmece,
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SITE LOCATION AND CONSULTATION RESULTS
PLAN - STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES
 Date: 15/2/2006
 Author: LG7/KEH
 Date: 13/7/2016


Figure 1

Appendix 1



KEY

-  The site: Land at Coldmeece
-  Settlement
-  Employment Land A-E
-  Road

Baden Hall Enterprises LTD
Land at Coldmeece

