



G.3 Barn Owls

Damhead Creek Phase II Proposed Development **Information Note on Barn Owls**

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A pair of barn owls have been observed breeding in the pump house over past years, including 2006, at the north east corner of the wetland creation area; they have also been observed roosting and flying over this area and the nearby grasslands in question. The embankment to the south of the grassland appeared to be used as a linear feature for commuting.

During the breeding season barn owls concentrate their foraging within 1km, perhaps up to 2km from the nest. In winter months this area is extended to up to 5km from this site.

Barn owls show site fidelity and will use a number of different sites within their home range, for example, a breeding site and several roosting sites. The field vole is the predominant prey for barn owls, although they will take shrews and mice.

The total area of grassland that could potentially be lost is approximately 5.86ha, all within a distance of 500m from the pump house. The grassland has an abundance of field voles, which were recorded under the felt tiles and tins during the reptile surveys, with a good number breeding underneath these refugia.

This rough grassland area is ideal foraging habitat for barn owls and the loss of this may impact any owls attempting to breed in the pump house. Although barn owls will travel up to 2km from a nest site for foraging, the availability of good forage areas on this site is perhaps restricted on this site due to the proximity of the pump house to estuary. This may be forcing them to concentrate their efforts to the western side of the estuary. Nearby potential foraging sites may exist in the surrounding area, but an initial assessment suggests most areas are regularly mown/managed grassland which will not hold such good foraging potential.

Reference:

English Nature and the Barn Owl Trust. 2002. *Barn owls on site: a guide to developers and planners*. English Nature, Peterborough

