



The Great Grid Upgrade

Sea Link

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Volume 9: Examination Submissions

Document 9.76.5.10: Change Request Appendix J Change 4 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN20026

**Version: A
November 2025**

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1. Change 4 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results

1.1 Site Works Undertaken

- 1.1.1 A Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out on land surrounding the B1121 Benhall Railway Bridge centred around OS grid reference TM 37990 61312 (see **Figure 1 – Phase 1 Habitat Map for Change 4 Benhall Bridge, Suffolk**). This survey was undertaken to inform the review of ecological effects potentially associated with proposed Change 4: Benhall Railway Bridge, Suffolk, which is being submitted with the Change Request.
- 1.1.2 The survey was undertaken on 5 November 2025. This survey was extended to include a search for protected species. Given the habitats present, the survey focused on the suitability of the bridge and nearby trees to support roosting bats and for signs of badger (*Meles meles*).
- 1.1.3 The weather conditions were 14°C, dry with 80% cloud cover and with a moderate south-westerly breeze.
- 1.1.4 Access was only possible via public rights of way (on pavements either side of the road and a path located to the south-east of the railway line). The active railway line was not accessed as this would require possession, therefore the underside of the bridge was not inspected.

1.2 Phase 1 habitat survey results

- 1.2.1 The results of the Phase 1 habitat survey are presented in **Figure 1 – Phase 1 Habitat Map for Change 4 Benhall Bridge, Suffolk** at the end of this report.
- 1.2.2 The railway comprised ballast and the railway line itself was bordered by semi-improved neutral grassland on both sides of the railway line to the north of the bridge and on the east side of the railway line only to the south of the bridge. These areas of semi-improved grassland could not be accessed (as an active railway) and therefore individual species could not be identified.
- 1.2.3 The bridge (TN1) (see Plate 1 and 2 below) supported a semi-improved neutral grassland road-side verge approximately 4 m wide to the north of the road (TN3) (see Plate 4). This was dominated by false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), with frequent red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and doves' foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*).
- 1.2.4 Broadleaved semi-natural woodland bordered the railway line and adjacent grassland on all sides. This was dominated by sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with a ground layer consisting of scattered bramble scrub (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Mixed scrub was present immediately north of the bridge and was dominated by bramble with frequent hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and occasional elm (*Ulmus sp.*), this developed into woodland to the north. This area of scrub supported a

stand of the invasive and non-native species, bamboo (*Bambusa* sp.), at OS grid reference TM 38003 61351 (TN2) (see Plate 3).

- 1.2.5 The surrounding area was dominated by mixed semi-natural woodland to the west of the railway line and around the A12. Arable cereal crops were present to the south of the road, to the east of the railway line, and a semi-improved neutral grassland verge to the north of the road. To the east of the bridge, the road was bordered by a species-rich native hedge to the north, comprising elm, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel, spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), and field maple (*Acer campestre*); and a species-poor native hedge to the south, dominated by elm, along with a 1 m wide semi-improved neutral grassland roadside verge, similar in composition to the verge over the bridge.

1.3 Protected species

- 1.3.1 No evidence of badger latrines, setts and/or foraging signs were recorded anywhere within the surveyed area; however, it should be noted that areas near the railway line and dense scrub could not be accessed.
- 1.3.2 Benhall Railway Bridge itself is a concrete structure with an opening approximately 6 m high by 15 m wide. The main bridge structure was constructed from large concrete blocks, with the surrounding structure of brick construction. Some features of low suitability for bats were present approximately 1 m high inside the tunnel portion of the bridge, in the form of drainage holes that were viewed from the public footpath. While it is unlikely that these features would support roosting bats due to their function for drainage, there is some possibility for them to do so, depending on their internal structure and if they are blocked, resulting in no water passing through them. No potential roost features (PRFs) with higher suitability were observed anywhere in the bridge's structure. However, access could not be gained under the bridge, so it is not possible to conclude that there is an absence of PRFs in this location at this time. Therefore, the bridge has been assessed as likely low (rather than negligible) suitability to support roosting bats.
- 1.3.3 Several trees were present in the areas surrounding the bridge, these were all assessed for their bat roost suitability and were assessed to have 'none' (i.e. no features for roosting bats or highly unlikely to be any).

Plates



Plate 1 Bridge at TN1



Plate 2 Bridge at TN1



Plate 3 INNS bamboo at TN2



Plate 4 Semi-improved grassland verge at TN3



Plate 5 Adjacent railway habitats

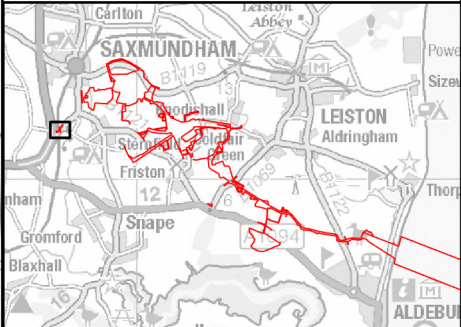


Plate 6 Adjacent railway habitats

Figures



- Legend
- Order Limits
 - Target Note
 - J2.1.1 - Intact hedge - native species-rich
 - J2.1.2 - Intact hedge - species-poor
 - A1.1.1 - Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
 - A1.3.1 - Mixed woodland - semi-natural
 - A2.1 - Scrub - dense/continuous
 - B2.2 - Neutral grassland - semi-improved
 - J1.1 - Cultivated/disturbed land - arable
 - J1.4 - Introduced shrub
 - J4 - Bare ground
 - Z99 - Hardstanding



0	21/11/2025	CHANGE ORDER	EB	DF	NB
Rev	Date	Description	GIS	Chk	App

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Scheme: SEA LINK

Document Title: PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP FOR
CHANGE 4 BENHALL BRIDGE, SUFFOLK

Creator: EB	Date: 21/11/2025	Checker: DF	Date: 21/11/2025	Approver: NB	Date: 21/11/2025
Document Ref: FIGURE 1	Scale: 1:1,500	Format: A3	Sheets: 1	Rev: 0	

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