

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.  
Ecological Consultants.**



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**FORMER COMBS HOSTEL, HALL LANE,  
DEWSBURY.**

**OS REF: SE 25573 – 19016.**

**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.**

**Ref No: 210150.**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.**

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# **1. INTRODUCTION.**

1.1. Planning Permission is being applied for to develop the Former Combs Hostel site that lies on Hall Lane, Dewsbury into new housing.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I to V of this report provide additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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## 2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area was walked where access was agreed and public rights of way were used where no access was agreed. All habitats within and immediately around the survey area were documented and the dominant species within that habitat listed in line with the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat surveys.

2.3. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

- \* Badger setts.
- \* Badger latrines or dung pits.
- \* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
- \* Badger paths.
- \* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
- \* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 100m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Dean M, Strachen R, Gow D and Andres R (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series)*. Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The mammal Society, London: -

- \* Water vole burrows.
- \* Water vole faeces and latrines.
- \* Water vole feeding stations.
- \* Water vole runs.
- \* Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
- \* Water vole lawns.
- \* Predator field signs.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter and Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines*: -

- \* Otter prints in soft mud.
- \* Otter spraints.
- \* Otter Holts.

2.6. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.7. The survey area was searched for trees and structures and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

- \* Holes, cracks or crevices.
- \* Bat Droppings.

2.8. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.9. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.10. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.11. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible,

in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.12. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.13. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.14. This document is prepared in line with The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This sets out the government policy on biodiversity and nature conservation and places a duty on Planning Authorities to give material consideration to the effect of a development on legally protected species when considering planning applications. The NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance on “Natural Environment” also promote sustainable development by ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity and that it is conserved and enhanced within the development.

2.15. This report is prepared in line with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act that came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

2.16. This survey was carried out by Stevan Roebuck. Since 2011 Stevan has had experience carrying out great crested newt and bat surveys. Since 2013 Stevan has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out ecology surveys, badger, great crested newt and bat surveys. Stevan holds a Natural England Survey License for Great Crested Newts and Bats and is currently working towards gaining further Natural England, NRW and SNH survey licences. Stevan is also a Qualifying Member of CIEEM.

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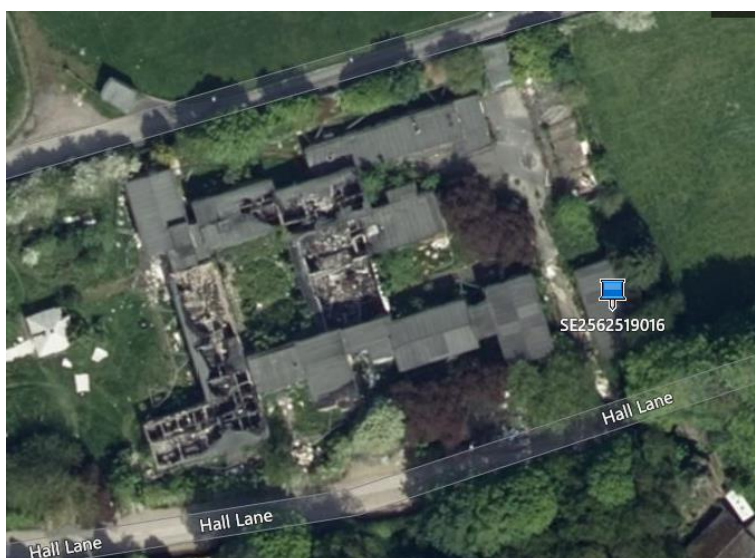
### 3. SURVEY RESULTS.

#### 3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A desktop data search was requested from West Yorkshire Ecology Service for records of protected species and designated sites within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. There are five records of great crested newts within 2km of the survey area, although all records lie over 1.65km from the survey area. Four of the records are over twenty years old and the other record is from 2008.

3.1.3. There is a record of a Common Pipistrelle roost, recorded in 2007 and located within the survey area around Building 9. The map below shows the location of the grid reference for this record. There is no more information on the roost.



3.1.4. There is a field record of a Common Pipistrelle bat located 40m to the southeast of the survey area, recorded in 2015. The map below shows this record, on the right.

3.1.5. There is a record of a Vesper bat species roost of 315 bats, recorded in 2004 and located 20m from the survey area, on the opposite side of Hall Road. The map below shows this record, on the left.



3.1.6. Previous bat surveys have been carried out on the site, with a large bat roost identified within the southern corner of Building 6.

3.1.7. There are other records of bats and bat roosts, although all over 175m from the survey area.

3.1.8. There is one record of an otter but this record is located over 1.6km from the survey area.

3.1.9. There are no designated sites within or adjacent to the survey area. The Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network lies to the south of the survey area, on the opposite side of Hall Road.

## **3.2. The Surveyed Area.**

3.2.1. The surveyed area was the Former Combs Hostel, off Hall Lane, Dewsbury. The site includes all the old residential and maintenance buildings on site and the area of land to the west. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed area and the immediate surrounding area.



3.2.2. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed area and the wider surrounding area.



3.2.3. The area surrounding the surveyed site consist of sports fields to the north, a farm and scattered woodland to the east, parkland containing pockets of woodland to the south and built up residential areas to the west.

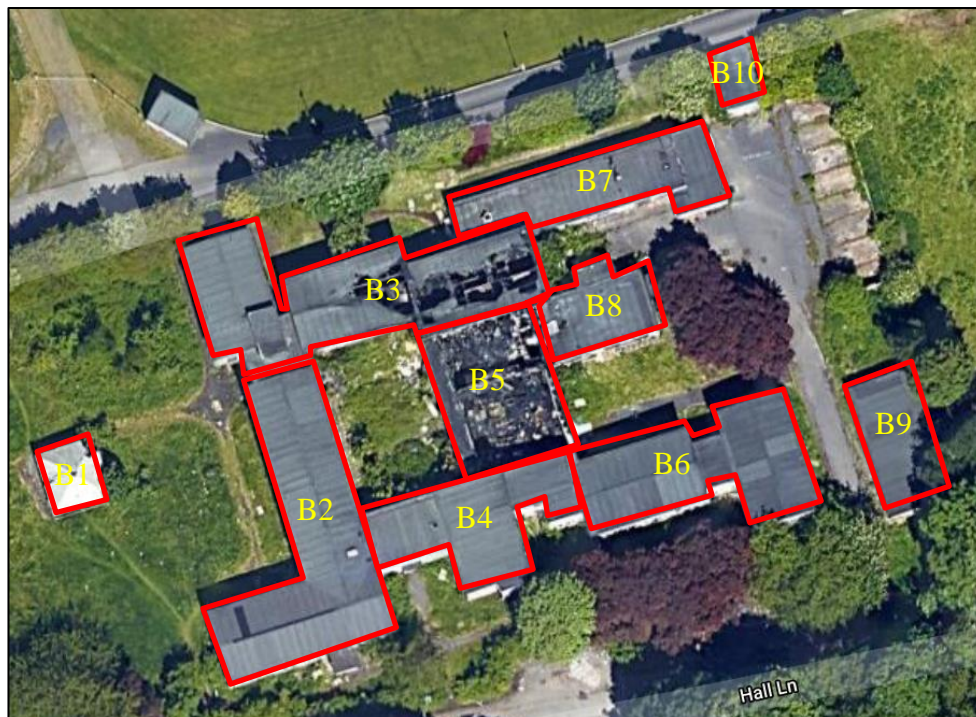
### 3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix VI of this report contains annotated maps marked up with the varying habitats that are cross referenced to target notes in Appendix VII of this report. The habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- Building
- Improved Grassland
- Dense Scrub
- Mosaic of Scattered Scrub and Tall Ruderals
- Scattered Trees
- Defunct Hedge Species Poor
- Bare Ground
- Fence
- Wall

#### 3.3.1.1. *Building*

The residential and maintenance buildings on site have been split and each given a number for the purpose of this report. Below is a map and brief description of each building with the buildings numbered 1 to 10.



### 3.3.1.1.1. Building B1.

B1 is a small pavilion building at the western end of the main buildings. The pavilion is open on two sides and supported with a steel frame with two brick walls to the north and eastern elevations, that are in a good state of repair. The roof is hipped and covered with timber and felt and is in a poor state of repair. The adjacent photograph shows B1.



### 3.3.1.1.2. Building B2.

B2 lies at the western end of the residential area and is a two-story building constructed with brick cavity walls that are generally in a good state of repair, although where some of the windows are missing, there are gaps into the cavity walls. All the windows and doors have been boarded up but some of the boards have been broken or removed. This building has been fire damaged with the roof completely missing with no loft space. The adjacent photograph shows B2.



### 3.3.1.1.3. Building B3.

B3 is attached to B2 on the northern elevation and is a two-story building constructed with brick cavity walls that are in a mixed state of repair. Some of the walls have been fire damaged with gaps created into the cavity walls. The windows and doors have been boarded up but some of the boards are now missing. The roofs of B3 are pitched with the western end intact, although the eastern roof has been fire damaged, as can be seen on aerial maps. The photographs below show the open windows at the western end of B3 and the fire damaged walls.



#### **3.3.1.1.4. Building B4.**

B4 is attached to B2 on the western elevation and is a two-story building constructed with brick cavity walls. The walls are generally in a good state of repair although there are areas that have been fire damaged leaving access into the cavity. The windows and doors have been boarded up but some of the boards are now broken or missing. The soffit and fascia boards are generally well fitted although there is some fire damage in places. The roof of B4 is semi pitched and appears to be intact although it could not be seen from ground level. No access was available to check for loft spaces. The photographs below show B4.



### 3.3.1.1.5. Building B5.

B5 lies between B3 and B4 and has been completely gutted by fire with only a timber shell and an internal solid brick wall still standing. The adjacent photograph shows the remainder of B5.



### 3.3.1.1.6. Building B6.

B6 is attached to B4 on the western elevation and is a two-story building constructed with brick cavity walls. The walls are in a good condition with no gaps to the cavity. The windows and doors have been boarded up but two of the boards on the first story are now missing. The fascia and soffit boards are generally well fitted although there is a small gap at the southeast corner. The roofs of B6 are pitched and covered with felt and appear in a good state of repair, although not all the roof could be seen from ground level. The photographs below show B6.



### 3.3.1.1.7. Building B7.

B7 is attached to B3 on the western elevation and is a single-story building constructed with brick cavity walls. B7 is the old boiler house and was open at the time of this survey. The roof is flat and covered with felt and has no loft space and is generally in a good state of repair, although there are gaps around a metal chimney flue and there are small areas where there are gaps behind the fascia boards. The adjacent photograph shows B7.



### 3.3.1.1.8. Building B8.

B8 lies just south of B7 and is a single-story building constructed with brick cavity walls. The walls are in a good state of repair with no gaps, cracks or missing bricks. The roof is flat and appears in a good state of repair with all fascia boards intact and well fitted. No access was available into B8 during this survey as all the windows and doors are boarded up. The adjacent photograph shows B8.



### 3.3.1.1.9. Building 9.

B9 lies in the southeast corner of the site and is a single-story building constructed with brick cavity walls. The walls are generally in a good state of repair although there is an area of missing brick in the eastern elevation. All windows and doors are boarded up with only a small broken piece of glass missing above the door. The roof is pitched and covered with felt and is in a good state of repair and all soffit and fascia boards are well fitted. No access was available into B9. The adjacent photograph shows B9.



### 3.3.1.1.10. Building B10.

B10 lies in the northeast corner of the site and is a small brick garage that has a steel roller shutter door with no windows. The garage has a flat roof and is in a good state of repair. No access was available into B10. The adjacent photograph shows B10.



### 3.3.1.2. Improved Grassland

At the western end of the site there is a large area of improved grassland and there are four small areas scattered around the buildings. The improved grassland contains species including perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocks foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with some tall ruderal species also identified including willowherb (*Chamaenerion sp(p)*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and thistle (*Cirsium sp(p)*). These areas will have been Amenity Grassland in the past but have been left unmanaged. The photographs below show two areas of Improved Grassland.



### 3.3.1.3. Dense Scrub

Throughout the surveyed area there are pockets of dense scrub that predominantly consist of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) with buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), dogwood (*Cornus sp.*), laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster spp.*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), sapling silver birch (*Betula pendula*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and oak (*Quercus sp(p)*) trees also present. The photographs below show areas of dense scrub.



### 3.3.1.4. Mosaic of Scattered Scrub and Tall Ruderal

There are patches of scattered scrub and tall ruderal species in the footprint of B5, between B7 and B8 and within an area of bare ground towards the eastern end of the site. These areas consist of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), willowherb (*Chamaenerion sp(p)*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), thistle (*Cirsium sp(p)*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and immature silver birch (*Betula pendula*) trees. The photographs below show two of these areas.



### 3.3.1.5. Scattered Trees

There are various scattered trees along the perimeter of the site and around the main buildings that include plum (*Prunus sp(p)*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*). The photographs below show some of the trees.



### 3.3.1.6. Defunct Hedge Species Poor

Along the southern site boundary there is a hedgerow that consists predominantly of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) but also has some sapling ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) trees with bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*) tangled in the hedge. The adjacent photograph shows a section of the hedge.



### ***3.3.1.7. Bare Ground***

There are areas of bare ground scattered around the site that include a large tarmac area to the west, a tarmac and concrete parking area to the east and various tarmac and concrete paths linking the buildings. The photographs below show two of the areas of bare ground.



### ***3.3.1.8. Fence***

Within the surveyed area there are several fences that include Heras fencing, which has been erected around the buildings, timber lath fencing within a section of the hedgerow to the south, timber ranch fencing along the eastern site boundary and chain link and palisade fencing at the northeast corner of the site. The photographs below show three types of fence.



### **3.3.1.9. Wall**

Three walls were identified within the surveyed area, a brick wall was located at the eastern end of the site, a stone wall at the southeast corner and two small brick walls either side of a small set of steps to the west of the buildings. The adjacent photograph shows the wall to the east.



## **3.4. Description of Fauna.**

3.4.1. No badger setts or other badger field signs were identified within the surveyed area during this survey of the site.

3.4.2. No watercourses that may provide a suitable habitat for water voles, otters or freshwater white clawed crayfish were identified within the surveyed area.

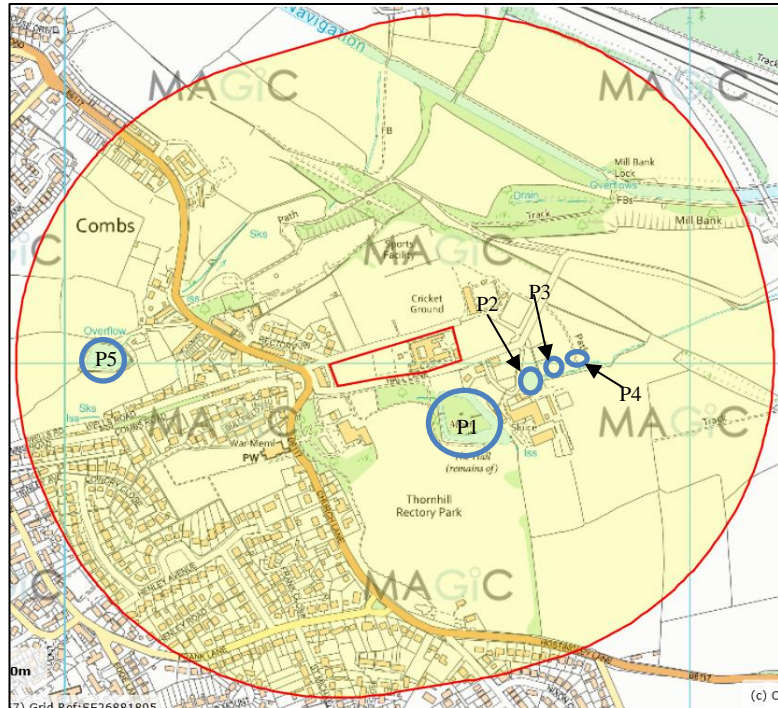
3.4.3. The buildings within the surveyed area all provide some potential for roosting bats, although as most of the buildings were either boarded up or unsafe to access, it was not possible to fully assess the level of bat potential within the buildings.

Previous bat activity surveys of the site have identified a large Common Pipistrelle bat roost within the southeast corner of B6 and the data search identified a record of a bat roost within Building B9.

3.4.4. There are various scattered trees within the surveyed area, the majority of the trees provide no potential for roosting bats, although some of the trees provide low potential for roosting bats.

3.4.5. The hedgerow along the southern site boundary and scattered trees along the western site boundary will provide moderate suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The scattered woodland within the parkland to the south of the site will provide high potential for foraging and commuting bats.

3.4.6. Five ponds with the potential to provide a suitable habitat for great crested newts were identified within 500m of the surveyed area whilst on site and by looking at maps of the surrounding area. The aerial map below shows the location of the site, the five ponds and a 500m buffer around the site. Two of the ponds are not shown on the map below but can be seen on aerial maps.



3.4.6.1. Three of the ponds were visited during this survey and a HSI (Habitats Suitability Index) score given to the ponds. A HSI gives an idea on how suitable the ponds are to support breeding great crested newts. Below is a table with the results of the HSIs for the ponds.

3.4.3.13. An explanation of the HSI criteria is included in Appendix II of this report.

HSI		P 1	P 2	P 3
SI 1	Location	1	1	1
SI 2	Pond Area	N/A	1	1
SI 3	Pond Drying	0.9	0.5	0.5
SI 4	Water Quality	0.67	0.33	0.33
SI 5	Shade	0.6	1	1
SI 6	Fowl	0.67	1	0.67
SI 7	Fish	0.67	0.67	0.67
SI 8	Ponds	0.6	0.6	0.6
SI 9	Terrestrial Habitat	1	1	1
SI 10	Macrophytes	0.4	0.3	0.7
Total score		0.7	0.68	0.71
Presence		Good	Average	Good

3.4.6.2. Pond 1 is a moat located within the woodland to the south of the site. The pond was given a HSI score of 0.7, Good. The adjacent photograph shows part of the moat.



3.4.6.3. Pond 2 lies to the southeast of the site within a farm. The pond lies on the west side of a public footpath. The pond was given a HSI score of 0.68, Average. The adjacent photograph shows the pond.



3.4.6.3. Pond 3 lies to the southeast of the site within a farm. The pond lies on the eastern side of the public footpath and is joined by flowing water to Pond 2. The pond was given a HSI score of 0.71, Good. The adjacent photograph shows the pond.



3.4.6.4. No HSI could be given to Ponds 4 and 5 as there was no available access to the ponds.

3.4.7. All the buildings within the surveyed area provide nesting bird potential during the nesting bird season, which extends between March and September each year. The vegetation within the surveyed site also provides an abundance of suitable nesting bird opportunities, particularly the dense scrub, hedgerows and scattered trees. Old inactive nests were identified within the trees along the western site boundary. As this survey was carried out in January, a thorough nesting bird survey was not carried out.

3.4.8. The surveyed area provides low potential habitat for reptiles as there are very few areas of refugia that reptiles could utilise, although the areas of bare ground may be suitable for basking reptiles.

3.4.9. The surveyed area does not provide any suitable habitat for hazel dormice as the site lies outside the natural range of the species.

3.4.10. The scattered trees within the surveyed area would provide a suitable habitat for red squirrels. However, the surveyed area lies outside the natural range of the species.

3.4.11. Cotoneaster is a non-native, alien, invasive, plant species, listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Cotoneaster was identified within the surveyed area adjacent to B4 and B5 and B5 and B6. The adjacent photograph shows the plant.



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## 4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. No designated sites were identified within the surveyed area or the immediate area surrounding the surveyed area. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on any designated sites.

4.2. The hedgerow along the southern site boundary is a Priority Habitat as listed on the NERC Act 2006. Therefore, if the proposed development will have an impact on the hedgerow, there will be a high impact on habitats with high ecological value.

4.3. The total Baseline Biodiversity Units on the site are shown in the table below.

Habitat Type	Area in ha.	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Buildings	2.897	V.Low	N/A	0Bu
Bare Ground	1.227	V.Low	N/A	0Bu
Improved Grassland	3.08	Low	Low	6.78
Trees, scrub and hedge.	3.816	Medium	Moderate	36.94
Total	11.02			43.71 Bu

4.4. No badger setts or any other badger field signs were identified within the surveyed area. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on badgers or their setts.

4.5. No watercourses that may provide a suitable habitat for water voles, otters or freshwater white clawed crayfish were identified within the surveyed area. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on any of these species.

4.6. The buildings within the surveyed area all provide some potential for roosting bats, although as most of the buildings were either boarded up or unsafe to access, it was not possible to fully assess the level of bat potential within the buildings. Previous surveys of the site have identified a large Common Pipistrelle bat roost within the southeast corner of B6 and the data search identified a record of a bat roost in Building B9. However, since the roost was identified, further surveys have been carried out with no bats identified within any of the buildings. Therefore, as two roost have previously been identified within two of the buildings, the proposed works may have an impact on roosting bats if bats have returned to the roosts.

4.7. There are various scattered trees within the surveyed area. The majority of the trees provide no potential for roosting bats, although some of the trees provide low potential for roosting bats. Therefore, the proposed works may have an impact on bats roosting within the trees unless suitable precautionary measures are put into place.

4.8. The hedgerow along the southern site boundary and scattered trees along the western site boundary will provide moderate value habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The scattered woodland within the parkland to the south of the site will provide high potential for foraging and commuting bats. Therefore, as the woodland to the south of the site will remain undisturbed by the proposed works, it is highly unlikely there will be any loss or fragmentation of foraging and commuting bat habitat. However, suitable precautionary measures should be put into place to avoid light disturbance to foraging and commuting bats.

4.9. Five ponds with the potential to provide a suitable habitat for great crested newts were identified within 500m of the surveyed area whilst on site and by looking at maps of the surrounding area. Three of the ponds were given a HSI score with ponds 1 and 3 scoring Good and Pond 3 Average for the potential presence of breeding great crested newts. Therefore, the proposed works may have an impact on great crested newts if they are present.

4.10. All the buildings within the surveyed area provide nesting bird potential during the nesting bird season, which extends between March and September each year. The vegetation within the surveyed site also provides an abundance of suitable nesting bird opportunities, particularly the dense scrub, hedgerows and scattered trees. Old inactive nests were identified within the trees along the western site boundary. As this survey was carried out in January, a thorough nesting bird survey was not carried out. Therefore, any works to the buildings or vegetation carried out during the nesting season will potentially have a high impact on nesting birds if they are present.

4.11. The surveyed area provides low value habitat for reptiles as there are very few areas of refugia although the areas of bare ground may provide suitable basking sites for reptiles. Therefore, the proposed works are unlikely to have any impact on reptiles if suitable precautionary measures are put into place.

4.12. The surveyed area does not provide any suitable habitat for hazel dormice as the site lies outside the natural range of the species. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on hazel dormice.

4.13. The scattered trees within the surveyed area would provide a suitable habitat for red squirrels. However, the surveyed area lies outside the natural range of the species. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on red squirrels.

4.14. Cotoneaster is a non-native, alien, invasive plant species, listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Cotoneaster was identified within the surveyed area adjacent to B4 and B5 and B5 and B6. Therefore, the proposed works are likely to have a high impact on spreading the plant unless suitable precautionary measures are put into place.

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## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS.**

5.1. This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report is designed to advise the client of the initial survey results so that they may be considered within the site development plan.

5.2. Once all surveys have been completed and the development plans have been finalised, the report must be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) where details of further survey results, mitigation and biological enhancements are included, to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact of the proposed development. That format will be suitable to submit to the Local Authority.

5.3. It is recommended that the hedgerow along the southern site boundary is left undisturbed as part of the works. If the hedgerow will be affected by the works, the Local Authority must be contacted for further advice before the works to the hedge commence.

5.4. It will be necessary to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity. It is therefore recommended that a landscape plan be drawn up outlining additional habitat to be provided on site in order to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%. The target will be to provide 48Bu in the development plan.

5.5. It is recommended that a bat dusk emergence survey is carried out on the buildings before the works commence to ensure bats are not using them as a roosting site.

5.6. Bat dusk emergence surveys must be carried out during the main bat activity period, which extends between May and August each year. If a bat is identified to be roosting within the buildings, further surveys will be required. A Natural England EPS Licence must then be applied for and a suitable mitigation strategy put into place before the works commence.

5.7. It is recommended that none of the trees on site are removed as part of the works as some of the trees provide low roosting bat potential. If the trees have to be removed, they must be soft felled and left in situ for a twenty-four hour period before being chipped or removed from site to allow any bats roosting within them to safely escape.

5.8. It is recommended that no lighting used during the works or as part of the new development is allowed to shine directly at the woodland to the south to avoid having any impact on foraging or commuting bats.

5.9. It is recommended that an eDNA survey is carried out on Ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4. eDNA surveys involve taking water samples from the pond that are sent off for analysis to see if great crested newts are/ or have been present within the ponds.

5.10. Access permission will be required to carry out the surveys, which must be carried out between mid-April and the end of June. If the results are positive for the presence of great crested newts, full great crested newt surveys will be required.

5.11. It is recommended that any works to the buildings or vegetation clearance work are carried out outside of the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September each year.

5.12. If any works to the buildings or any vegetation clearance is carried out during the nesting season, the work must be immediately preceded by a thorough nesting bird survey carried out by a suitably experienced person. Any nests identified must remain undisturbed until the young have fledged from the nest.

5.13. As a precaution it is recommended that all personnel working on the site are briefed on the potential presence of reptiles and how to identify them. A toolbox talk on reptiles has been included at the end of this report to aid in this matter.

5.14. In the unlikely event that any reptiles are encountered during the works they should be allowed to move off the site of their own accord. If large numbers of reptiles (5+) are identified work in that area should cease and the author of this report should be contacted for further advice.

5.15. It is recommended that the Cotoneaster that is growing within the site is removed and disposed of as contaminated waste. All parts of the plant including its berries should be removed.

5.16. It is recommended that additional Biodiversity Enhancements are incorporated into the development including integrated bat bricks in 10% of the buildings and integrated nest boxes in 10% of the new dwellings,

5.17. Hedgehog access points should be incorporate in all fences on site to enable access across the site. Holes should be provided under all fences, 130mm square.

\*\*\*\*\*

Prepared by:	
Stevan Roebuck	Date: 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Checked by:	
Derek Whitcher. BSc, MCIEEM, MCMCI	Date: 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2021.

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## **Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.**

### *Ecology*

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

### *Surveys*

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

## *Legislation*

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATs agreement. Numerous species are also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

## **Appendix II. GREAT CRESTED NEWT INFORMATION.**

### *Ecology*

Great Crested Newts breed in ponds and other water bodies. They can begin to migrate to their breeding ponds as early as the first frost-free days in late January with the majority reaching their breeding ponds by mid-March. Timing will be influenced by several factors, primarily evening temperatures above 5°C and rainfall.

The peak egg-laying period is from mid-March to mid-May. The newts will lay their eggs individually, mainly on the leaves of submerged plants. The larva hatch after three weeks and then take another 2-3 months to complete larval development. Adult newts generally leave their breeding ponds from late May onwards.

Once the larvae have completed metamorphosis (the transition from aquatic larvae, efts, to land-adapted juveniles), they emerge from the pond. This emergence begins in late August and generally continues until late October. It takes 2-4 years to reach sexual maturity, during which time the newts will be land based.

Adults and immature newts spend the winter in places that afford protection from frost and flooding. This will generally be underground amongst tree roots, in mammal burrows, or under suitable refuges above ground like deadwood or rubble piles. Hibernation may last from October to February.

Whilst on land, outside the hibernation period, great crested newts will forage at night, taking a wide range of invertebrate prey.

Great Crested Newts therefore spend the majority of their time on land and only visit the ponds for breeding purposes.

Great Crested Newts will travel large distances between ponds and terrestrial refuges. It is recommended that anywhere within 500m of a pond should be treated as potential Great Crested Newt habitat.

## *Surveys*

Walkover surveys will identify the suitability of any ponds within the area for Great Crested Newts by using a HSI assessment. The terrestrial habitat and their links will also be assessed.

Aquatic surveys of newts can be carried out through the trapping of ponds in suitable weather conditions during the breeding season, although these surveys do not provide accurate population estimates.

Terrestrial surveys and exclusions can be conducted between March and September when newts are moving out of breeding ponds.

An experienced surveyor must carry out the surveys and must be in possession of an appropriate Natural England Great Crested Newt survey license.

It is essential that Great Crested Newt surveys are planned well in advance of any development and ideally before Planning Consent is sought. Surveys can only be carried out at the appropriate time of year and repeat surveys are essential.

## *Legislation*

Great Crested Newts are protected under Appendix II of the BERN Convention (1982), Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex II and IV of the Habitats Directive, Annex II of the Conservation and Wildlife Regulations (2010) and are listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance.

This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any Great Crested Newt, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

If Great Crested Newts are to be affected by any development, a thorough assessment of the population is essential followed by the design of a comprehensive mitigation package. Only when this has been done can a license application be submitted to Natural England for approval. It takes 30 working days for a license application to be determined and the period that mitigation measures take can be measured in months. It is therefore essential to plan well in advance of development commencing.

## **Appendix III. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.**

### *Ecology*

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man-made structures or buildings.

### *Surveys*

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

### *Legislation*

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

## **Appendix IV. REPTILE INFORMATION.**

### ***Ecology***

There are five main species of reptile that reside in the UK; Common or Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*); Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*); Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*); Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) and Adder (*Vipera berus*). The Adder is the only native species that is venomous although this is rarely harmful to humans.

Reptiles occupy a wide range of habitats including woodland, marshes, heathland, moors, sand dunes, hedgerows and bogs. Sand Lizards are confined to moorland and coastal sand dunes where they lay their eggs in the warm sand. The range of the Sand Lizard in the UK is therefore very limited. Slow Worms can be found in a wide variety of habitats throughout Britain and is the most likely reptile to be found in urban and suburban environments.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning, they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies, then later they may move back into the shade because they do not sweat and have to be careful not to overheat. During hot summers, Adders will try to move to damper, cooler sites.

Over winter reptiles will hibernate in burrows or under logs where they are protected from the cold and predators, emerging from February onwards as the weather warms up.

Reptiles generally begin to mate April to May with young born in late July to September. The Common Lizard gives birth to live young, hence the term viviparous, meaning live bearing.

### ***Surveys***

Reptile surveys involve the searching of refuge such as logs and stones for any animal sheltering below. Artificial refuge may be laid out on site for the purpose of reptile surveys.

### *Legislation*

Reptiles are protected under Appendix II (sand lizards) and Appendix III (common lizard, slow worms, smooth snake, grass snake and adders) of the BERN Convention (1982), partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and are all listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance.

This makes it an offence to disturb any reptile while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection or to obstruct access to such a place.

## Appendix V. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES INFORMATION.

### *Ecology*

The Government has acknowledged the problems that can be caused by non-native invasive species. In 2008 the Government launched “The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain”. The strategy provides a framework for a more co-ordinated approach to invasive species management. It seeks to create a stronger sense of shared responsibility across government, key organisations, land managers and the public.

The Non-Native Species Secretariat has been established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Details of the secretariat including risk assessments and action plans for some species are available at [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org).

In general, there are four basic methods of controlling weeds; mechanical, chemical, natural and environmental.

- ***Mechanical control*** includes cultivation, hoeing, pulling, cutting, raking, dredging or other methods to uproot or cut weeds.  
*Where this method is used all plant material must be considered “controlled waste” and must be disposed of properly.*
- ***Chemical control*** uses approved herbicides.
- ***Natural control*** uses pests and diseases of the target weed to weaken it and prevent it from becoming a nuisance.
- ***Environmental control*** works by altering the environment to make it less suitable for weed growth, for example by increasing or decreasing water velocity.

### *Surveys*

A site will be searched for invasive plant species growing on site, from mature plants to new shoots. A site will also be searched for dead stems indicating that plants that may have seasonally died back are present.

## Legislation

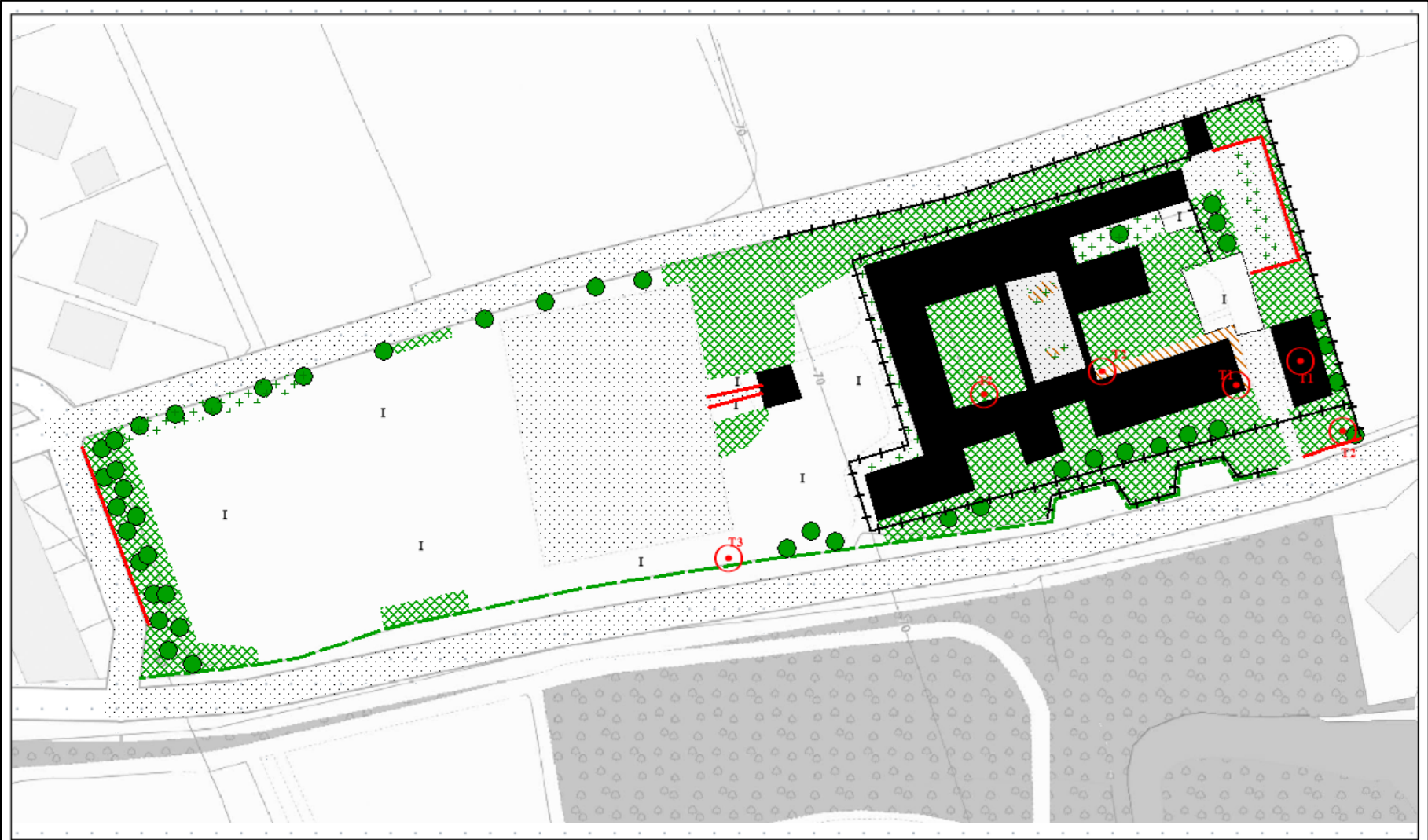
Invasive species listed under Schedule 9 are prohibited from release into the wild. Schedule 9, Section 14(2) prohibits 'planting' or 'causing to grow' in the wild of any plant listed in Part 2 of Schedule 9.

The following is a list of all the species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Common Name	Scientific Name	England & Wales	Scotland
Alexanders, Perfoliate	<i>Smyrnium perfoliatum</i>	✓	
Algae, Red	<i>Grateloupia luxurians</i>	✓	
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	<i>Lamium galeobdolon subsp. Argentatum</i>	✓	
Azalea, Yellow	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>	✓	
Balsam, Himalayan	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Entire Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster integrifolius</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Small Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i>	✓	
Creeper, False Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus inserta</i>	✓	
Creeper, Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	✓	
Dewplant, Purple	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>	✓	
False-acacia	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>		✓
Fanwort	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>	✓	✓
Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>	✓	✓
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	✓	✓
Garlic, Three-Cornered	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>	✓	
Hogweed, Giant	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	✓	✓
Hyacinth, water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis angustifolia</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis integrifolia</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis laevis</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis pyrifera</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Japanese	<i>Laminaria japonica</i>	✓	✓

Knotweed, Giant	<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>	✓	
Knotweed, Hybrid	<i>Fallopia japonica x Fallopia sachalinensis</i>	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>		✓
Leek, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>	✓	✓
Lettuce, water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>	✓	✓
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora</i>	✓	
Parrot's-feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>	✓	
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	✓	
Potato, Duck	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	✓	
Primrose, Floating Water	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>	✓	
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>	✓	
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	✓	
Rhubarb, Giant	<i>Gunnera tinctorial</i>	✓	
Rose, Japanese	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	✓	
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>	✓	✓
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile</i>	✓	
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile tomentosoides</i>		✓
Seaweed, Californian Red	<i>Pikea californica</i>	✓	✓
Seaweed, Hooked Asparagus	<i>Asparagopsis armata</i>	✓	✓
Seaweed, Japanese	<i>Sargassum muticum</i>	✓	✓
Seaweeds, Laver (except native species)	<i>Porphyra sp. except - P. amethystea P. leucosticta P. linearis P. miniata P. purpurea P. umbilicalis</i>	✓	✓
Shallon	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>		✓
Stonecrop, Australian swamp	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>	✓	✓
Wakame	<i>Undaria pinnatifida</i>	✓	✓
Waterweed, Curly	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>	✓	✓
Waterweeds	<i>All species of the genus Elodea</i>	✓	

**Appendix VI. ANNOTATED MAPS OF THE SURVEY AREA.**



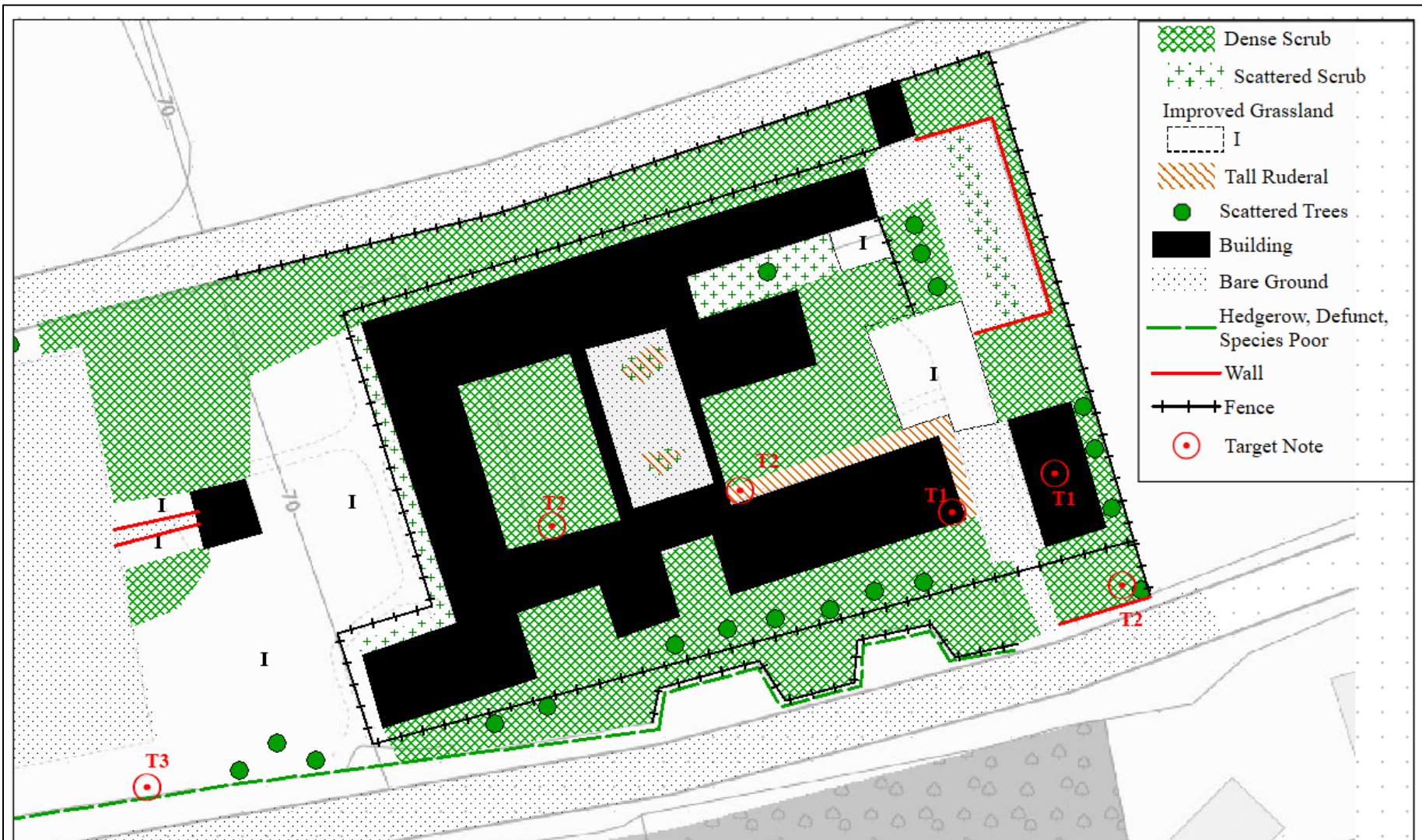
Site Name: Former Combs Hostel, Hall Lane.

Prepared by: Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Reference: 210150

Date: 8th February 2021





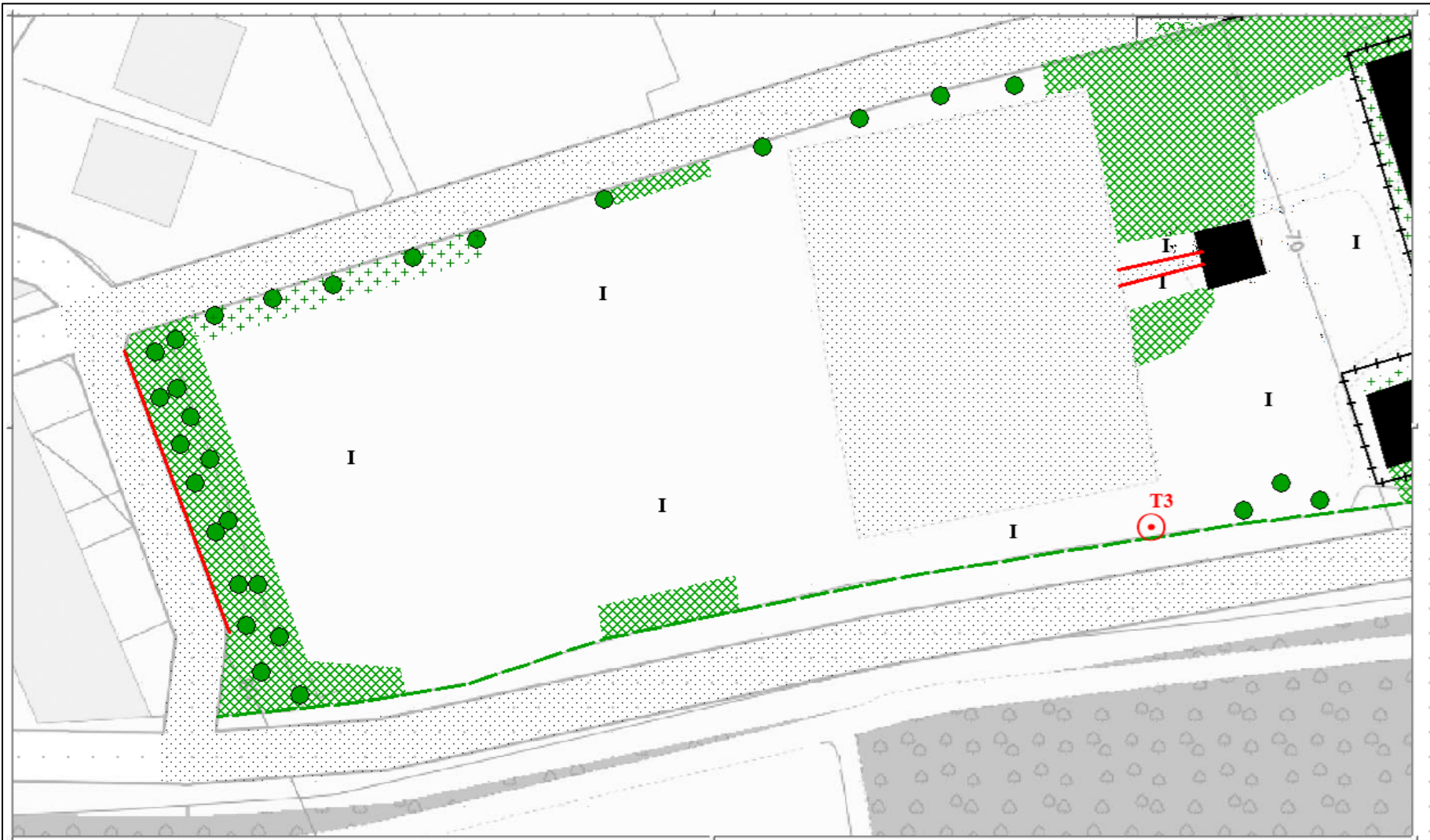
Site Name: Former Combs Hostel, Hall Lane.

Prepared by: Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Reference: 210150

Date: 8th February 2021





Site Name: Former Combs Hostel, Hall Lane.

Prepared by: Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Reference: 210150

Date: 8th February 2021



## **Appendix VII. TARGET NOTES.**

Target Note 1 are the bat roost that have previously been recorded in B6 and B9.

Target Note 2 are the clumps of Cotoneaster growing on the site.

Target Note 3 is the hedgerow along the southern site boundary.



## Toolbox Talk: Bats

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18 species of bat have been recorded in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here.

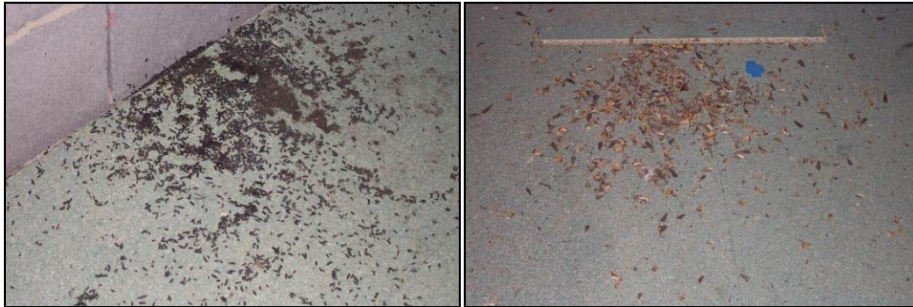
### Identification.

Some species can be extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

Species such as the Brown Long Eared bat pictured above can be more easily identified in the hand. Whereas, the Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle are more difficult to identify.



Bats are more easily identified by field signs such as droppings or feeding remains.



### Habitat.

Bats are highly specialised creatures and require a relatively narrow range of suitable conditions in order to sustain a viable population. Bats require an abundant supply of flying insect food in places where they can easily be caught and they need safe and reliable roosting sites, particularly during breeding and hibernation.

Bats are heavily dependent on buildings and trees for their roost sites and therefore extremely susceptible to disturbance from human activities. Development schemes can also isolate bat populations and sever roost sites from favoured feeding areas by removing hedgerows or other features used as commuting routes.

Bats are susceptible to disturbance and have been known to abandon roost sites after instances of disturbance. The effects of disturbance are more pronounced at different times of year. Serious disturbance during breeding can result in the breeding females being killed or the abandonment and subsequent starvation of dependant young. Repeated disturbance during winter hibernation can result in the death of adult animals from starvation.

The level of protection afforded to bats in the UK and European legislation reflects the fact that it is now generally accepted that bats have declined substantially, maybe by as much as 60%, over recent years. Most species are declining and vulnerable with all species being protected.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and occasionally the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly Pipistrelle, can quickly adapt to manmade structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

### Legislation.

Bats and their roosts are fully protected at all times (whether the bats are currently present or not). This protection comes from the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (updated by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) and the Habitats Regulations 1994. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

Under the Habitats Regulations, where bats may be affected by development proposals, a licence is required from Natural England. Natural England's published guidelines on the licence procedure indicate that if, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence then a licence is required. If, on the other hand the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence, then a licence is not required.

**If bats or bat field signs are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at [info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk)**

## Toolbox Talk: Bats in Trees

18 species of bat have been recorded in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. All UK bat species have been found in and around trees or woodland habitats although the way that different species utilise trees varies with trees or woodland habitat being used for roosting, foraging and navigation.

This document concentrates on the use of trees as bat roosts.

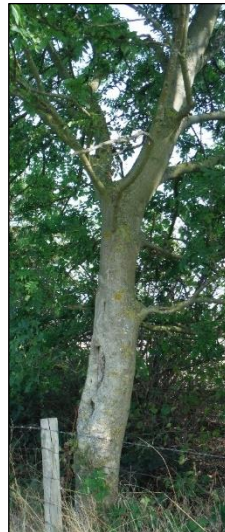
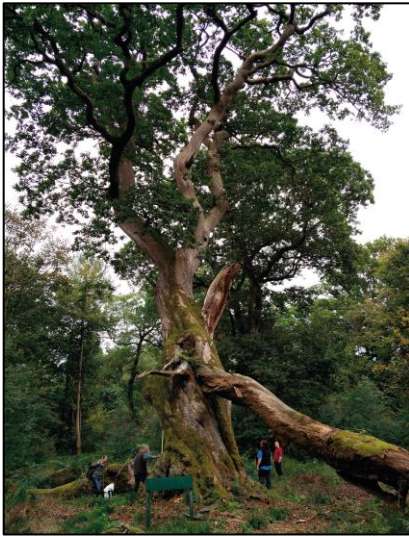
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### Trees with Bat Roost Potential.

Typically, it is thought that bats will only roost in large mature trees. However, all trees that display suitable PRF (Potential Roost Features) may be used by bats, despite the overall size of the tree.



In larger trees PRF may not be visible from ground level due to the foliage of the tree, the location of the PRF or due to the small size of the opening.

### PRF (Potential Roost Features).

Bats will utilise an abundance of different features around a tree at different times of year including trunk hollows, knot holes, splits/cracks in branches and sheltered areas of flaking bark with different species typically utilising different features.



Knot



Split



Rotten

Any feature matchbox size and above should be considered suitable for use by bats with the preference being for PRF with a smaller entrance for safety.

### Legislation.

Bats and their roosts are fully protected at all times (whether the bats are currently present or not). This protection comes from the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (updated by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) and the Habitats Regulations 1994. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

Under the Habitats Regulations, where bats may be affected by development proposals, a licence is required from Natural England. Natural England's published guidelines on the licence procedure indicate that if, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence then a licence is required. If, on the other hand the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence, then a licence is not required.

**If works are required on trees that display suitable PRF further advice should be sought prior to the works commencing. For further advice contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at [info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk)**

## Toolbox Talk: Great Crested Newts

The great crested newt population has suffered a major decline in Britain over the last century. Numerous ponds have been lost, unmanaged ponds have become silted up and over-shaded, development has destroyed ponds and associated terrestrial habitat and caused fragmentation of populations. The loss of grassland, scrub and woodland has resulted in fewer opportunities for foraging, dispersal and hibernation.

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### Identification: Great Crested Newts.

Great crested newts are dark, nearly black in colour with a speckled belly, distinctly orange in colour and with orange stripes across their toes. Great crested newts can grow up to 15cm in length.



### Identification: Smooth and Palmate Newts.

Smooth newts are predominantly lighter in colour although their colour may vary from sandy coloured to very dark. Smooth newts also have a speckled orange belly but the orange colour fades to pale.



Palmate newts are similar to smooth newts but with a pinker belly and wedged feet.

### Habitat.

Great crested newts live predominantly on land but breed in ponds between March and June.

Great crested newts may be found on land almost all year round. They spend the daytime under rocks or logs, in cracks, crevices or holes, or anywhere that is moist and cool and emerge at night to forage. During the winter months great crested newts hibernate deep down away from frost.

When disturbed in terrestrial habitats newts will usually be very sluggish and will take time to move away.

### Legislation.

The great crested newt is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, recently modified by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000. The great crested newt is therefore subject to the provisions of Schedule 9, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a great crested newt.
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

The great crested newt is also listed on Annex II and Annex IV of The Conservation (Natural Habitats & C) Regulations 1994. Regulation 39 makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture or kill a great crested newt.
- Deliberately disturb a great crested newt.
- Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of a great crested newt.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a great crested newt.

The legislation applies to all life stages of great crested newts.

The maximum fine on conviction of offences under Section 9 and Regulation 39 currently stands at £5,000. The CroW Act 2000 amendment also allows for a custodial sentence of up to six months instead of, or in addition to, a fine. In addition, items, which may constitute evidence of the commission of an offence, may be seized and detained.

**If great crested newts are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at [info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk)**

## Toolbox Talk: Nesting Birds

The bird nesting season varies according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September.

A bird's nest is the place in which a bird lays and incubates its eggs. Some species build a nest structure while other species lay their eggs directly onto the ground or on a rocky ledge. Nests can be constructed from a variety of materials and are usually lined with feathers or fur.

### Identification.

Some birds construct nests in an area where it can be seen while others construct nests that are hidden from view and are more difficult to identify.

The photograph to the right shows a Moorhen nest which can easily be seen.



Nests can also be identified from field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself. The presence of a nest can be identified by seeing the adult birds leaving and returning to the nest regularly with food to feed the chicks.

The photograph to the left shows a Wren's nest in overhanging tree roots, which is almost impossible to see.

Care should be taken at any time during the nesting season particularly when regular bird activity is seen, or birds can be heard calling.



### Habitat.

Birds regularly nest in a variety of places with some species nesting in buildings or vegetation and others nesting on the ground or on water. However, birds may nest in any habitat or situation if they identify a suitable nest site.



### Legislation.

Part 1. -(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that:

If any person intentionally or recklessly:

- Kills, injures or takes any wild bird.
- Takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, or
- Takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird.

He shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that:

If any person intentionally or recklessly:

- Disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young, or
- Disturbs young of such a bird.

He shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

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If a nest or potential nesting activity is identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at [info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk)

## Toolbox Talk: Reptiles

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### Identification: Grass Snakes.

The grass snake can be up to 120cm long. It is generally dark green in colour but may occasionally appear grey with vertical black bars and spots that run along its sides. There is usually a yellow marking around the neck.



### Other Reptiles.

In addition to the reptiles outlined on this document, there are also two other reptile species in Great Britain, the smooth snakes and the sand lizard. These reptiles are a lot less common than the four species covered with the smooth snake being predominantly found on heathland in southern England and the sand lizard found throughout Great Britain in coastal dune areas.

These species are also afforded a higher level of protection because they are European Protected Species.

### Identification: Adders.

The adder is the only native species that is venomous, but it is rarely harmful to humans. Adult adders are generally up to 66cm long. Back ground colouration is a light shade of grey or brown with a black zigzag marking along the length of the back. As with all reptiles, colouration varies and becomes duller as sloughing (skin shedding) approaches.



### Habitat.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies and then later they may move back into the shade so as not to overheat. Hence, reptiles require a habitat that provides a range of suitable refugia for shelter such as dense vegetation, rubble or log piles, or crevices and open areas for basking such as bare ground, rocks or railway ballast shoulders. During hot summers reptiles may be found in damper, cooler sites. Reptiles hibernate, spending the winter in burrows or under logs protected from the cold and predators.

### Identification: Slow Worms.

Slow worms grow to around 45cm in length. The males and females display a marked difference in colour when fully grown. In general, the species displays colouring that varies from light brown, dark brown, grey, bronze or brick red with the females often displaying a dark vertebral stripe and both males and females displaying occasional markings on the flanks.



### Identification: Common Lizards.

Common lizards grow to around 16cm. They are grey brown to dark brown, often with a darker streak that may run the entire length of the spine. A continuous dark band bordered by light yellow or white spots is often seen on either side of the body. The underside of the males is egg yolk yellow to orange spotted with black. Females are yellowish grey.



When disturbed in their natural habitat reptiles will usually move away quickly.

### Legislation.

Reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They received greater protection following reviews of the schedules published in 1988 and 1991. This means they are protected against intentional or recklessly killing and injuring and against sale or transporting for sale.

**If reptiles are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at [info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk)**