Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

140A MANCHESTERS ROAD, HUDDERSFIELD.

MAP REF: SE 13682 16203

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: **240227.**

Date: **29th February 2024.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to develop an area of land at 140A Manchester Road, Huddersfield. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), which also includes a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the building on site, is required in support of the planning application.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out the PEA and PRA of the site to determine whether there are any ecological issues associated with the planned works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 28th February 2024. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I of this report provides additional information on specific species and is 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 UK Habitat Classification methodology to identify the broad habitat types throughout the survey area.

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.

2.4. 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 water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Rob Strachan, Tom Moorhouse and Merryl Gelling (2011). *Water Vole Handbook: Third Edition*: -

* 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 mature trees and derelict buildings and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th 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 caried out by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A desktop data search for existing records of protected species or designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to West Yorkshire Ecology (WYE).

3.1.2. WYE hold records of four non-statutory, locally designated sites within 2km of the survey area, as listed below.

Name of Site	Designation
Beaumont Park	Local Geological Site
Gledholt Woods	Local Wildlife Site
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	Local Wildlife Site
Sir John Ramsden Canal	Local Wildlife Site

3.1.3. WYE hold records of one statutory, locally designated site as listed below.

Name of Site	Designation
Gledholt Woods	Local Nature Reserve

3.1.4. The site does not lie within the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network.

3.1.5. There are no national or international designated sites in the search area.

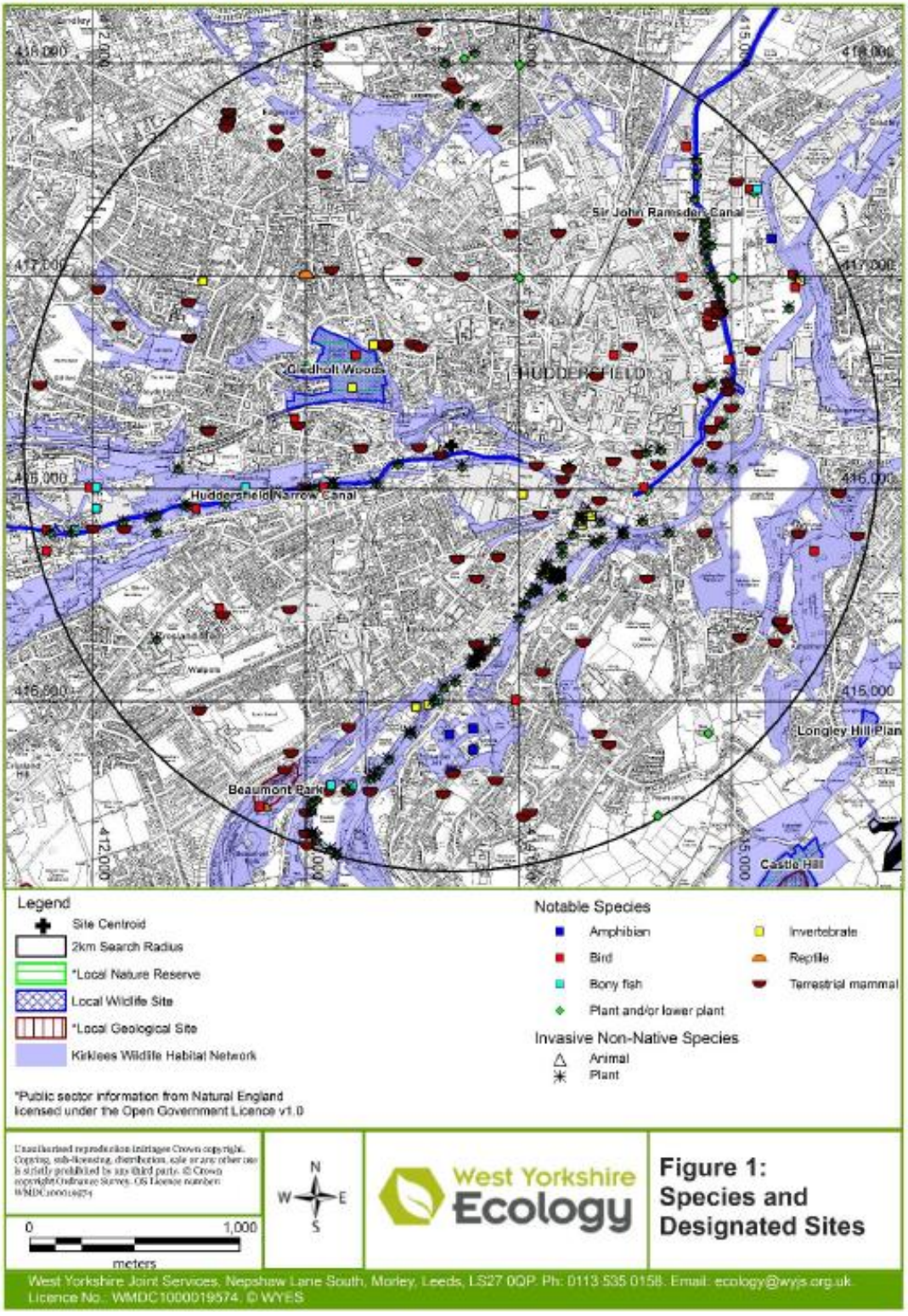
3.1.6. The map on the next page below shows the location of these designated sites.

3.1.7. The species records include records of common frog, common toad, smooth newt, palmate newt and great crested newt but all are in excess of 1400m from the survey area.

3.1.8. There are grass snake and slow worm records, but these are in excess of 1km from the site.

3.1.9. There are numerous bat records in the surrounding area, predominantly field records but also including a number of pipistrelle and noctule records. The closest records are in excess of 500m from the site.

Figure 1 – Species and Designated Sites



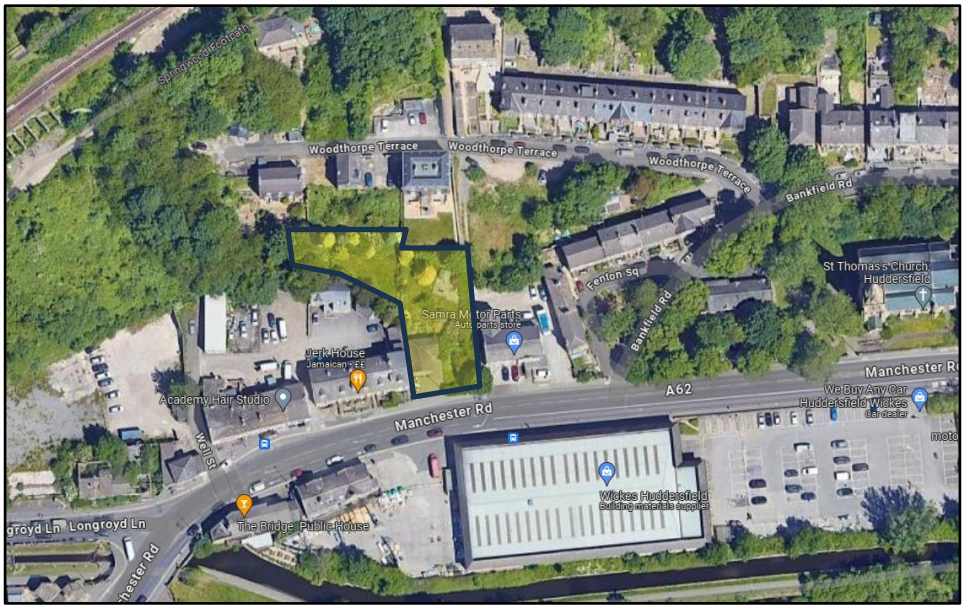
3.1.10. There are confidential badger records as close as 200m from the site, but the record is of a disused sett. No further details will be provided here.

3.1.11. A copy of the data search is available on request but must not be placed in the public domain.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the site marked with a red arrow and the surrounding area. The site lies in a residential and commercial area to the west of Huddersfield town centre.

3.2.2. The site comprises an existing dwelling plus a garden area to the rear, as shown shaded in yellow below.



3.3. Description of Habitats.

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

- g4 – Modified grassland.
- h3h – Mixed Scrub.
- u1b – Developed land sealed surface.
- u1b5 – Building.
- u1e – Built linear feature.
- h2 – Hedgerow.
- h2b – Other hedgerow.

3.3.2. Biodiversity calculations have been undertaken using the Small Sites Metric 4.0. This automatically undertakes condition assessments.

3.3.1. g4 – Modified grassland.

3.3.1.1. The main area of the site comprises two areas that have been lawn but have not recently been cared for. Species present include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), creeping bent *(Agrostis stolonifera,)* Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), square stalked willowherb *(Epilobium tetragonum)*, meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), green alkanet *(Pentaglottis sempervirens*), ivy leaved cyclamen *(Cyclamen hederifolium*), valerian *(Centranthus ruber) and mullein (Verbascum thapsus)* with scattered bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*).

3.3.1.2. Adjacent to the west side of the middle wall there are scattered introduced shrubs, species include, ornamental conifer (*Juniperus Sp*), buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*) and rose (*Rosa Sp*).

3.3.1.3. At the top end of this strip of shrubs, there was a clump of Montbretia with another small clump on the east side of the wall, shown below.

3.3.2. h3h – Mixed Scrub.

Secondary Code: 32 Scattered Trees.

3.3.2.1. There is a strip of scrub across the north-eastern side of the site. Species present include bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), green alkanet *(Pentaglottis sempervirens)*, ivy leaved cyclamen *(Cyclamen hederifolium*), yellow stemmed dogwood (*Cornus Sp*), willow leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster salicifolius*) with firethorn (*Pyracantha Sp*) extending from the neighbouring hedgerow behind.

3.3.2.2. There are four conifer trees growing in the northwest corner of this area.

3.3.3. u1b – Developed land sealed surface.

3.3.3.1. At the site entrance there is an existing dwelling with a tarmac car park on the roadside, a path around and an old rockery adjacent with steps up to the garden.

3.3.2. There is also an old concrete building base in the northeast corner of the garden.

3.3.3. These are all classed as developed land with a sealed surface.

3.3.4. u1e – Built linear feature – wall.

Secondary Code: 853 Mortared Wall.

A north to south brick wall currently divides the site.

3.3.5. h2 – Hedgerow.

3.3.5.1. Up the eastern side of the site there is a privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) hedge with a rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) plant at the southern end.

3.3.5.2. Across the top of the eastern half of the site there is a conifer hedge. The species present is Lawson Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*).

3.3.5.3. In the southwest corner there are the remains of a hawthorn hedgerow. The plants have grown tall and are covered with dense ivy and there are large gaps within the hedgerow.

3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. No badger setts or field signs were identified anywhere on the site. There are records of badgers in the area around the site, but the site is in a residential area, unsuitable for a badger sett.

3.4.2. There is no watercourse close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish.

3.4.3. There are no ponds close to the site to provide habitat for great crested newts. The amphibian records in the data search results are in excess of 1400m from the site.

3.4.4. There is the existing dwelling present on the site. This is a two-storey building with cavity brick walls and a pitched roof covered with Rosemary tiles.

3.4.4.1. The walls are in good condition, well pointed and sealed throughout. The fascia boards and soffits are close fitting and there is a good cement joint between the top of the gable end walls and the underside of the roof tiles.

3.4.4.2. The roof tiles are close fitting Rosemary tiles. These are all in place although a few are cracked and chipped. However, this has not created any gaps that are large enough for roosting bats to enter.

3.4.4.3. Inside the building there is one loft space, L shaped and with two gable ends and one hipped corner. There is a felt lining beneath the roof tiles that is in place and is sound. The floor is boarded out and covered with fibre glass insulation and there is a light in the loft. The eaves are well sealed with no light ingress to the loft space. No bats or bat field signs were found in the loft space.

3.4.4.4. The dwelling was assessed in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edition as having negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.4.5. There are no trees on the site of sufficient maturity to provide opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.6. The scrub and the hedgerows on the site provide low value foraging habitat for bats.

3.4.7. The scrub and hedgerows around the site provide opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to August each year. No nests were identified during this survey, but the habitat is suitable.

3.4.8. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is a small site in a residential area and the nearest reptile records in the data search results are in excess of 1km from the survey area.

3.4.9. The site is assessed to be an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse, located outside the natural range for the species.

3.4.10. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species.

3.4.11. Montbretia and Rhododendron are both present on the site and both are alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The variety of cotoneaster found on the site does not appear on Schedule 9.

3.4.12. There are no hedgehog records in the data search results and although the habitat is suitable, there are busy roads around the site that will deter the species.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are no records of Nationally Designated Sites within 2km of the site. In addition, the development is not an issue to being within the zone of interest of the SSSI sites. Therefore, there will be **No Negative Impact** on such sites.

4.2. WYE holds records of three Local Wildlife Sites and one Local Geological Site within 2km of the site but at sufficient distance from the site that there will be **No Negative Impact** on such sites.

4.3. The habitat on site that are to be affected by the proposed works is an area previously used as gardens and comprising an area of modified grassland and overgrown borders, now scrub. The Biodiversity value of the site as it stands is shown below.

Area Habitats.

Habitat Type	Area in M^2	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Modified grassland	787	Low	Moderate	0.315
Mixed scrub	166	Medium	Moderate	0.133
Developed land sealed surface	264	V.Low	N/A	0
Urban trees	1,994	Medium	Moderate	1.8345
Total	1,217			2.2823

Linear Habitats.

Habitat Type	Length in M	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Hedgerow – non native	60	V.Low	Poor	0.060
Native hedgerow	33	Low	Moderate	0.1320
Total	93			0.1920

The area Biodiversity value of the site prior to any works is 2.2823Bu and the linear Biodiversity value is 0.1920Bu.

4.4. No badger setts or field signs were identified anywhere on the site. There are records of badgers in the area around the site, but the site is in a residential area, unsuitable for a badger sett and therefore there will be **No Negative Impact** on the species.

4.5. There is no watercourse close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish. There will therefore be **No Negative Impact** on these species.

4.7. There are no ponds close to the site to provide habitat for great crested newts and the amphibian records in the data search results are in excess of 1400m from the site. There will be **No Negative Impact** on amphibians.

4.8. There is one residential building present on the site. A Preliminary Roost Assessment of that building assessed it to have negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, 4th Edition. There will be **No Negative Impact on** roosting bats in buildings.

4.9. There are no trees of sufficient maturity to provide opportunities for roosting bats and therefore the proposed development will have **No Negative Impact** on any bats roosting in trees.

4.10. The scrub and the hedgerows on the site provide low value foraging habitat for bats. There will be a **Negative Impact** on foraging and commuting bats if the hedgerows are removed and not replaced.

4.11. The scrub around the site provides opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to August each year. No nests were identified during this survey, but the habitat is suitable. Clearance of the vegetation on site will have a **High Negative Impact** on nesting birds if carried out during the nesting season.

4.12. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is a small site in a residential area and the nearest reptile records in the data search results are in

excess of 1km from the survey area. The proposed development will have **No Negative Impact** on reptiles.

4.13. The site is assessed to be an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have **No Negative Impact** on the species.

4.14. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have **No Negative Impact** on the species.

4.15. Montbretia and Rhododendron are both present on the site and both are alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Therefore, there will potentially be a **Moderate Negative Impact** on the potential spread of Schedule 9 plants in the wild.

4.16. There are no hedgehog records in the data search results and although the habitat is suitable, there are busy roads around the site that will deter the species. With precautions in place, there will be no impact on hedgehogs.

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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 any further surveys required 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. This should include biodiversity calculation to demonstrate that a 10% increase in Biodiversity can be achieved. The EcIA format will be suitable to submit to the Local Authority.

5.3. It is recommended that the following recommendations are taken into account prior to the development plans for the site being finalised.

5.4. It is recommended that consideration is given to retaining some of the higher value habitats on the site and creating connectivity across the site for a wide range of species, including bats, which will use this site to forage and commute.

5.5. It is further recommended that as much native species planting as possible is incorporated into the site landscape plans in order to provide replacement biodiversity. It is recommended that this be shown on a landscape plan of the site that shows the habitats to be created on the site the native species to be planted in each area and the areas of each habitat so that the results can be entered into the Biodiversity Net Gain calculations. The target is to provide a 10% increase of biodiversity as a result of the development.

5.6. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance is undertaken outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August. Should any vegetation clearance be necessary during this time, it must be preceded by a nesting bird survey no more than two days before those works commence.

5.7. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance is undertaken with due care. Vegetation should be cut down to no lower than 150mm initially and all arisings removed. This will deter hedgehogs, amphibians and reptiles without causing them

harm. After 24 hours to allow them to move away, the site can then be cleared to ground level.

5.8. It is recommended that the montbretia and rhododendron plants on site are remove with due care and disposed of as controlled waste to ensure the plants are not caused to spread in the wild. Alternatively, these can be retained as garden plants but will then need protecting to ensure the development does not cause them to spread.

5.9. It is recommended that biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into any new dwelling in line with the requirements of the NPPF. It is recommended that one integrated bat brick and two integrated swift nest boxes are built into the new dwelling.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 29th February 2024.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou, BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 4th March 2024.

6. REFERENCES.

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Appendix I. 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

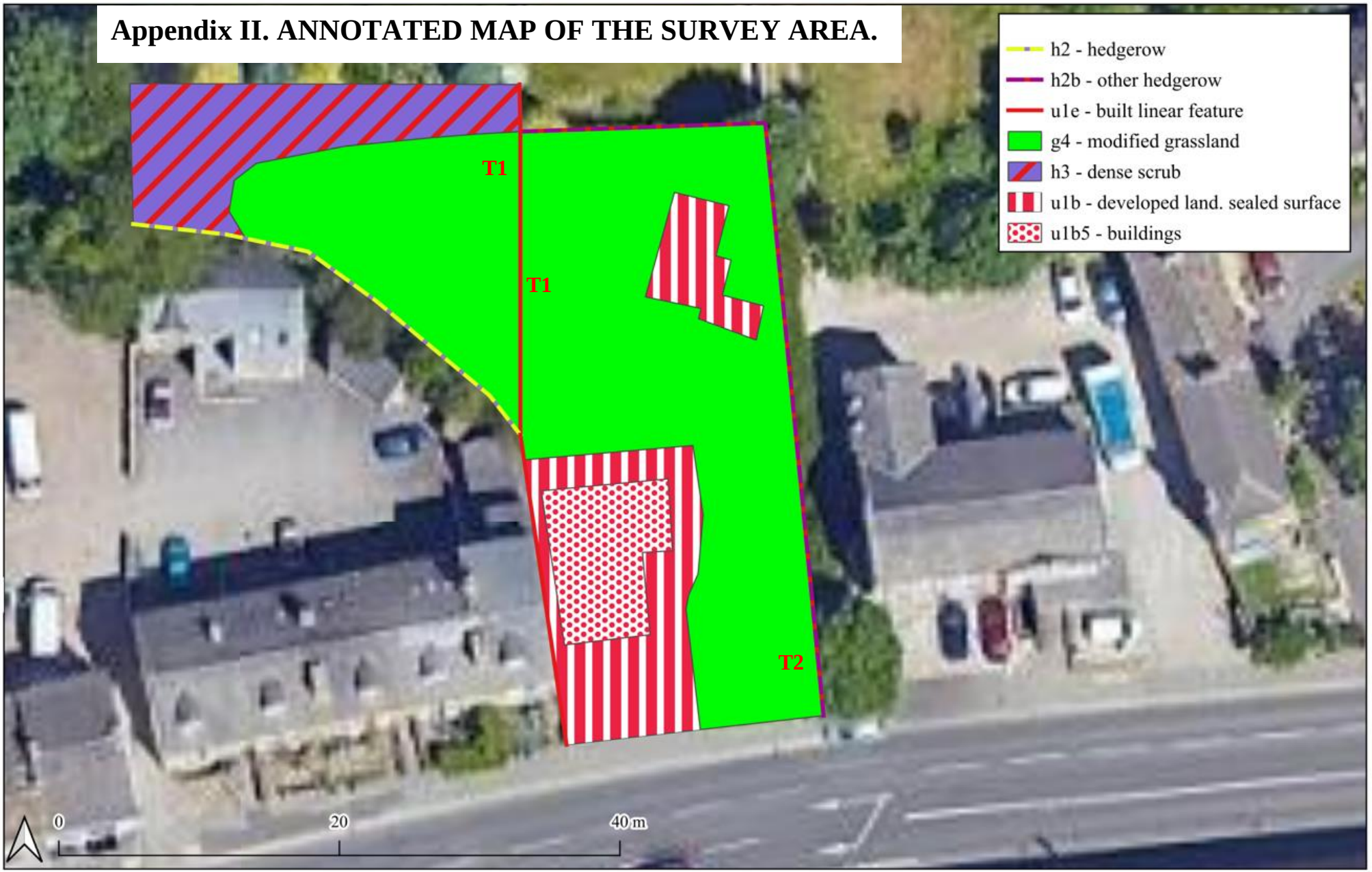
Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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 II. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Site: 140a Manchester Road

Reference: 240227

Date: 29.02.2024

Produced by: Mitch Greenhalgh

Appendix III. TARGET NOTES.

T1. Montbretia

T2. Rhododendron.