Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

MARSHLANDS HOUSE, SHEPLEY.

MAP REF: SE 18416 08909

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: **250814.**

Date: **20th August 2025.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. It is planned to submit a planning application to construct an additional house in the garden of Marshlands House.

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. That survey was carried out on 14th August 2025. This report outlines the findings of all surveys and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provides 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 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 carried 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.

****

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to West Yorkshire Ecology for existing records of designated sites and protected species within 2km of the survey area.

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

3.1.3. The following non-statutory sites lie within the search area. The locations for these are shown on the map overleaf and none lie close enough to the survey area to be impacted by the proposals.

Name of Site	Designation
Holme House Grasslands	Local Wildlife Site
Holme House Wood	Local Wildlife Site
Lower Jane Well	Local Wildlife Site
Scar Hole Quarry	Local Geological Site
Upper and Lower Stone Woods	Local Wildlife Site and Local Geological Site
Yew Tree Wood	Local Wildlife Site

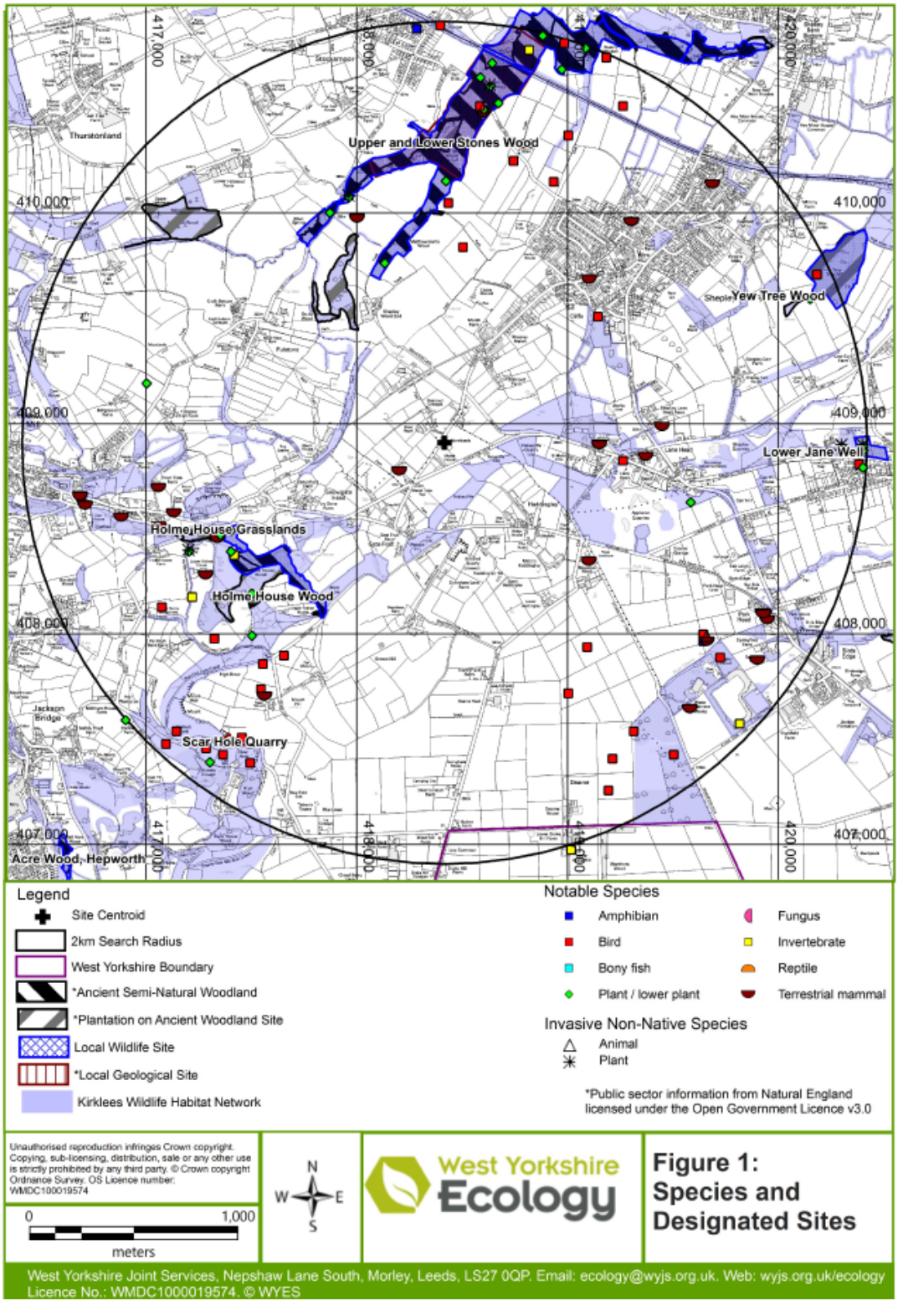
3.1.4. The site does not lie within the Kirklees Wiildlife Habitat Network.

3.1.5. There are no badger sett records within 1km of the survey area.

3.1.6. There are no great crested newt records in the data search results and the closest common amphibian record is in excess of 1,500m from the survey area.

3.1.7. There are abundant bat records in the surrounding area with the closest roost record being a Pipistrelle roost 730m from the survey area.

3.1.8. The data search results are available to the client on request but must not be placed in the public domain.


Upper and Lower Stones Wood
Yew Tree Wood
Lower Jane Well
Holme House Grasslands
Holme House Wood
Scar Hole Quarry
Acre Wood, Hepworth
Thurstonland
Jackson Bridge
417,000
418,000
420,000
410,000
409,000
408,000
407,000
Legend
Site Centroid
2km Search Radius
West Yorkshire Boundary
*Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
*Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site
Local Wildlife Site
*Local Geological Site
Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network
Notable Species
Amphibian
Bird
Bony fish
Plant / lower plant
Fungus
Invertebrate
Reptile
Terrestrial mammal
Invasive Non-Native Species
Animal
Plant
*Public sector information from Natural England licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0
Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright. Copying, sub-licensing, distribution, sale or any other use is strictly prohibited by any third party. © Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. OS Licence number: WMDC100019574
0
1,000
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W
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S
West Yorkshire Ecology
Figure 1: Species and Designated Sites
West Yorkshire Joint Services, Nepshaw Lane South, Morley, Leeds, LS27 0QP. Email: ecology@wyjs.org.uk. Web: wyjs.org.uk/ecology
Licence No.: WMDC1000019574. © WYES

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 is located in a rural area on the hills above Shepley, surrounded by open grazing land to all sides.



3.2.2. Marshlands House and gardens are shown below shaded in yellow.



3.2.3. The aerial photograph below shows the site with the proposed new dwelling shaded in red and the access drive shaded in yellow.



3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix III of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying habitats that are on the site. The primary habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- g4 – Modified grassland.
- u1 – Built areas and gardens.
- u1b – Developed land, sealed surface.
- u1b5 – Building.
- u1c – Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface.
- u1e – Built linear feature

3.3.2. Biodiversity calculations have been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, the current version at this time.

3.3.3. g4 – Modified Grassland.

3.3.3.1. The middle of the garden is a lawn that is used to exercise dogs and is regularly mown and is classified as modified grassland.

3.3.3.2. Species present include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale)* and white clover *(Trifolium repens*).



3.3.3.3. The condition assessment for this habitat is within the Statutory BNG Condition Assessment document that accompanies this report. The condition of the modified grassland is poor, passing three criteria.

3.3.4. u1 – Built areas and gardens.

3.3.4.1. Around the outside of the lawn there are flower beds, as shown in the photographs below.



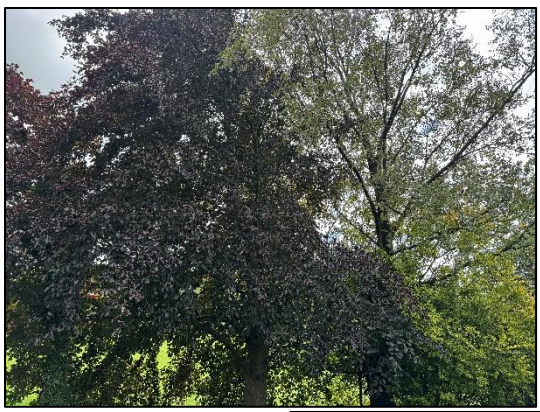
3.3.4.2. Species present include Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), day lily (*Hemerocallis* Sp), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), elephants ears (*Bergenia*

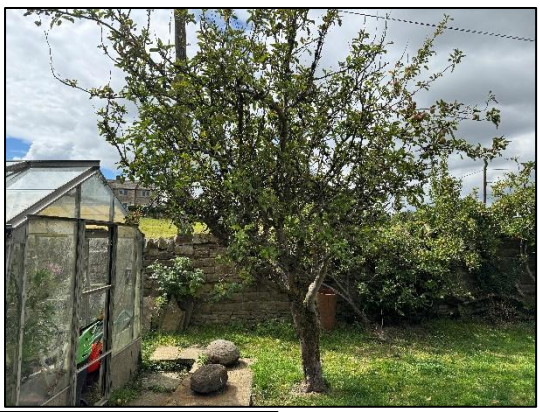
cordifolia), spiraea (*Spiraea japonica*), evergreen honeysuckle (*Lonicera nitida*), hebe (Hebe Sp), euonymus (*Euonymus japonica*), flowering cherry *(Prunus* Sp), skimmia (*Skimmia japonica*), laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus),* viburnum (*Viburnum* Sp), apple (*Malus domestica*), barberry (*Berberis Darwinii*), silver birch (*Betula pendula),* viburnum tinus (*Viburnum lauristinus tinus*), plum *(Prunus* sp(p)), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), crab apple (*Malus* sp(p)), variegated privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*), purple maple (*Acer palmatum atropurpurium*), copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica atropurpurium*), variegated holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), mahonia (*Mahonia japonica*) and Lawson's cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*).

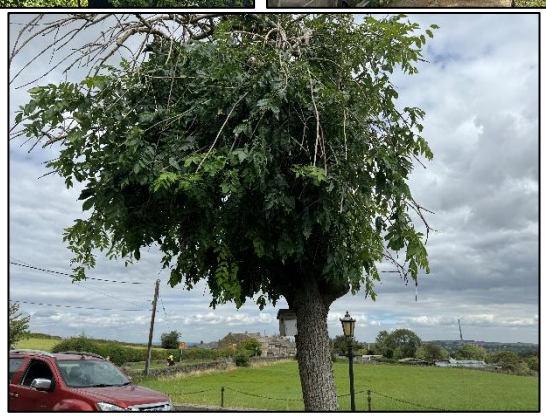
3.3.4.3. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.5. Secondary Code 200 -Individual tree

3.3.5.1. There is a copper beech tree and a silver birch tree along the south-eastern site boundary and an apple tree in front of the greenhouse plus one heavily pollarded ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) tree at the front of the site.







3.3.5.2. The condition assessment for the trees is within the Statutory BNG Condition Assessment document that accompanies this report. The condition of each of the four trees is moderate, each passing three or four criteria.

3.3.6. u1b - Developed land, sealed surface.

3.3.6.1. Access to the site shares the existing driveway that is a sealed surface.



3.3.6.2. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.7. u1b5 – Building.

3.3.7.1. There are two buildings on the site, the greenhouse and the shed as shown below.





3.3.7.2. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.8. u1c – Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface.

3.3.8.1. There is an existing area of gravel at the site entrance. This is shown below.



3.3.8.2. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.9. u1e – Built linear feature.

3.3.9.1. There is a stone wall around much of the existing garden.

3.3.9.2. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.









3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. There were no badger setts or badger field signs present anywhere within the survey area.

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

3.4.3. There are no ponds within 750m from the site and there are few amphibian records and no great crested newt records in the data search results.

3.4.4. The only buildings in the survey area are a greenhouse and a shed and neither is suitable for roosting bats.

3.4.5. The trees present on the site contain no potential roost features and are therefore unsuitable for roosting bats.

3.4.6. The site lies in an elevated and exposed area of open grazing fields. This surrounding habitat is assessed to have a low potential for foraging bats.

3.4.7. There are few opportunities for nesting birds in the survey area limited to nests in the trees and shrubs present on site.

3.4.8. The site is assessed to have little potential for reptiles. The site is surrounded by open grazing fields with no potential shelter for reptiles and there are no reptile records in the data search results.

3.4.9. The site is assessed as an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse as it lies well outside of their natural range and the habitat is totally unsuitable.

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. No alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act were found growing on the site.

3.4.12. There is no suitable habitat on the site for hedgehogs and the garden area is regularly disturbed by exercising dogs.

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4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.

4.1. Baseline biodiversity calculations have been carried out using the Statutory Metric tool, the current metric at the time of writing this report. The calculations have been completed for baseline area habitats. The condition assessments for each habitat are shown in the attached condition assessment document and the baseline biodiversity values are shown in the attached metric calculation tool as well as being listed below.

4.2. Area Habitats – Pre Development.

Habitat Type	Area in Ha	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units (BU).
Modified grassland	0.029	Medium	Poor	0.06
Vegetated garden	0.018	Low	N/A	0.04
Developed land, sealed surface	0.007	V.Low	N/A	0
Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface.	0.008	V.Low	N/A	0
Individual trees	0.0168	Medium	Moderate	0.13
Total	**0.062**			**0.23**

4.3. There are 0.23BU of area habitat on the site pre-development. There is no linear biodiversity present on the site.

4.4. However, this is a self-build project that satisfies the definition below taken from the Gov.uk website and is therefore exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain.

Self-build and custom build applications

You must meet all of the following conditions to qualify for an exemption as a self-build or custom build.

The development must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings
- be on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

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5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. There are no international or nationally designated sites within the search area. There are Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological sites within 2km of the site but none are close enough to be affected by the proposed development.

5.2. The habitat on the site that will be impacted by the proposed development will be predominantly modified grassland and vegetated garden. There are currently 0.23Bu of area habitats present in the survey area. However, the proposed development is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.3. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified anywhere in the survey area. Therefore, the development will have no impact on badgers.

5.4. 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.

5.5. There are no ponds within 750m from the site and there are few amphibian records and no great crested newt records in the data search results. The proposed development will have no negative impact on amphibians.

5.6. The only buildings in the survey area are a greenhouse and a shed and neither is suitable for roosting bats. These were assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines to have negligible potential for roosting bats. The proposed development will have no negative impact on roosting bats in buildings.

5.7. There are four trees in the survey area but none contain potential roost features and therefore there are no opportunities for roosting bats in trees. The proposed development will not impact on bats roosting in trees.

5.8. The site lies in an elevated and exposed area of open grazing fields. This surrounding habitat is assessed to have a low potential for foraging bats. The proposed development will have no impact on foraging bats.

5.9. There are few opportunities for nesting birds in the survey area limited to nests in the trees and shrubs present on site. The proposed development will have no impact on nesting birds as longs as the development commences outside the nesting bird season.

5.10. The site is assessed to have little potential for reptiles. The site is surrounded by open grazing fields with no potential shelter for reptiles. The proposed development will have no negative impact on reptiles.

5.11. 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.

5.12. 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.

5.13. No alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act were found growing on the site. Therefore, there is no potential to cause the spread of Schedule 9 plants in the wild.

5.14. There is no suitable habitat on the site for hedgehogs and the garden area is regularly disturbed by exercising dogs. The proposed development is unlikely to impact on hedgehogs.

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. There is no post development landscape plan for this site but it is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain on the basis of being a self-build. It is nevertheless recommended that as much of the existing habitat as possible is retained.

6.2. It is recommended that any necessary vegetation clearance is undertaken outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August inclusive. If any work commences between March and August that includes vegetation clearance, this should 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.

6.3. It will be necessary to incorporate biodiversity enhancements in the new building on the site in line with the NPPF.

6.4. To achieve this, it is recommended that bat roosting opportunity will be provided in the new building in the form of one integrated bat brick, which should be provided in a gable end.

6.5. In addition, it is recommended that two integrated swift nest boxes provided in the new building to provide nesting opportunities.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 20th August 2025.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou, BSc, MCIEEM	Date: 25th August 2025.

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JNCC, Peterborough.

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. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

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

Many species 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 III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA PRE DEVELOPMENT.



Site: Marshlands House

Reference: 250814

Date: 19.08.2025

Produced by: Samuel Bentley