Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

PARK SPRINGS, GRIMETHORPE.

OS REF: SE 40825 08327.

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: **260333.**

Date: **23rd March 2026.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Plans are being prepared for the creation of business units and associated hardstanding area on land between Park Spring Road and Springvale Road, Grimethorpe.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site to establish whether there are any ecological issues that may affect the proposed development and assess the likely biodiversity net gain (BNG) implications.

1.3. That survey was carried out on 9th March 2026. This report outlines the findings of this survey and makes appropriate recommendations. This report also includes the baseline biodiversity calculations that will inform a BNG assessment.

1.4. Appendices I 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 primary habitat types throughout the survey area. All primary habitats are accompanied by secondary codes which are used to add further specific details where necessary. Each primary habitat and unique set off secondary codes will be shown individually in the appended annotated map.

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 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.) (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 Jess Brown BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM. Since 2018 Jess has had experience in a professional capacity as an Ecologist carrying out protected species and habitat surveys. Jess holds a Natural England survey licences in respect of bats, great crested newts, and barn owls, and a Scottish Natural Heritage survey licence in respect of barn owls. She has also successfully completed a number of courses run by FSC and CIEEM in the relative protected species and carrying out site assessments using vegetation and has completed a MSc in Biological Recording. Jess is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

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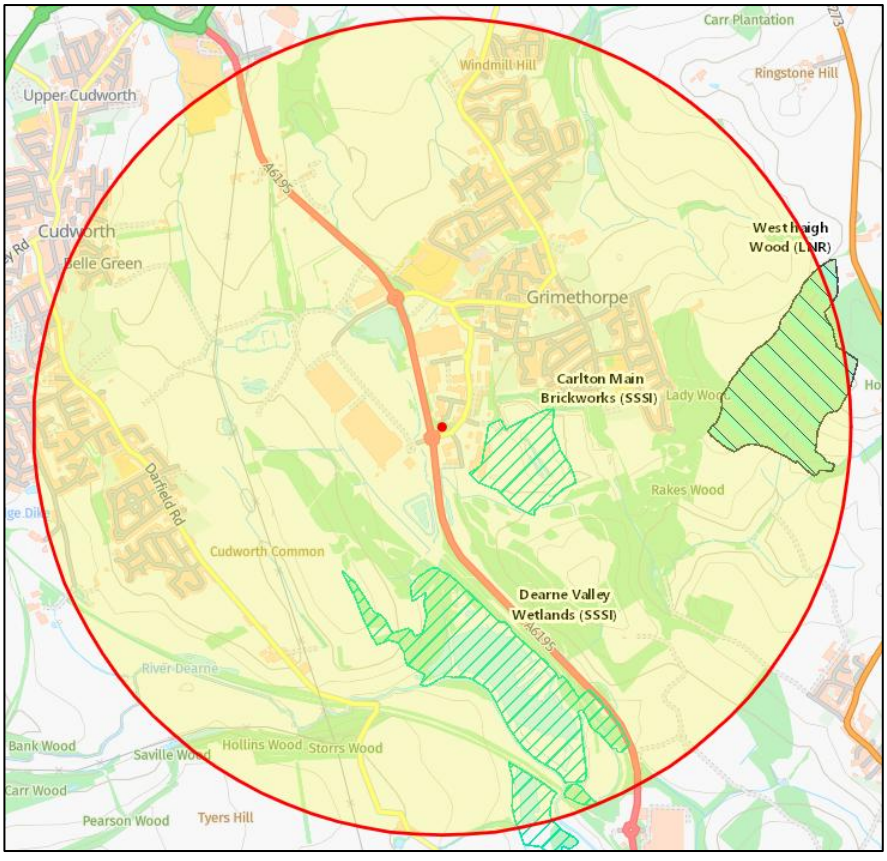
3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search for existing records of protected species and local designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to Barnsley Biological Records Centre.

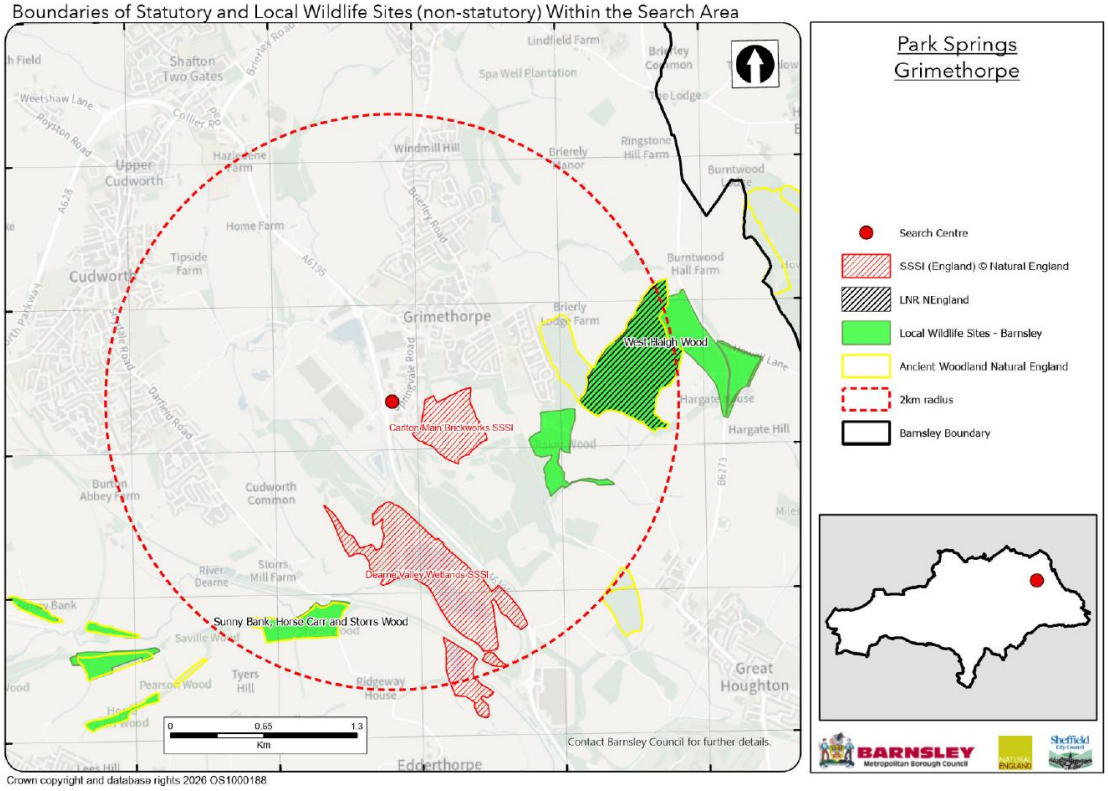
3.1.2. The survey area lies within 2km of three statutory designated sites, shown in the map below, including Carlton Main Brickworks Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI, and West Haigh Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The closest site is Carlton Main Brickworks SSSI, approximately 210m from the survey area.



3.1.3. A search of the MAGIC website also shows that part of the site lies within an impact risk zone for a SSSI, but the risk zone does not apply to this type of development.

3.1.4. The data search also found three non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and three areas of ancient woodland within 2km of the survey area, shown on the map on

the following page. The closest site is West Haigh Wood LWS, which lies approximately 950m to the east of the survey area.



3.1.5. The data search returned the following recent (post-2015) and relevant records:

- Ten records of two bat species were returned, including common pipistrelle and *Myotis* sp. The closest record is a foraging record of a "bat" (species not recorded), approximately 960m from the survey area. The closest roost record is a common pipistrelle roost approximately 1.3km from the survey area.
- A single record of water vole was found approximately 1.5km from the survey area.
- Thirteen records of great crested newt were returned. The closest record is approximately 860m from the survey area.
- Fifty-three reptile records were returned, including nineteen records of common lizard and thirty-two records of grass snake. None were close to the survey area.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area is located in an industrial area in Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire. It is surrounded by industrial/commercial units and roads in all directions.

3.2.2. The limits of the survey area are outlined in red in the aerial map below.

3.3. Survey Limitations.

The survey area had been cleared of most vegetation prior to the survey. Therefore, it was not possible to determine the condition of the habitats previously present or create an accurate species list for the habitats. However, a best estimate of the habitat types and conditions has been made using photographs of the site pre-clearance provided by the client, satellite imagery, and street-view imagery.

3.4. Description of Habitats.

3.4.1. Appendix II of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying primary habitats across the site. These are site are listed below, followed by descriptions of each habitat. Secondary codes have been applied where appropriate.

- h3 – Dense scrub
- g4 – Modified grassland

3.4.2. h3 – Dense scrub

The majority of the survey area had been cleared prior to this survey taking place. However, a margin of dense scrub remained, suggesting that this habitat was dominated

by scrub. The remaining areas of scrub comprised hawthorn (*Quercus robur*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), small oak trees (*Quercus robur*), and cherry (*Prunus avium*). Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) was also present around the edges of the site.

Current photo – edge of scrub habitat

Pre-clearance

Pre-clearance

3.4.3. g4 – Modified grassland

An area of grassland is shown on satellite imagery in the north of the site. This is no longer present on site, but from a combination of satellite imagery, street-view imagery,

and what is still present on neighbouring sites, it is assessed that this was likely an amenity lawn.

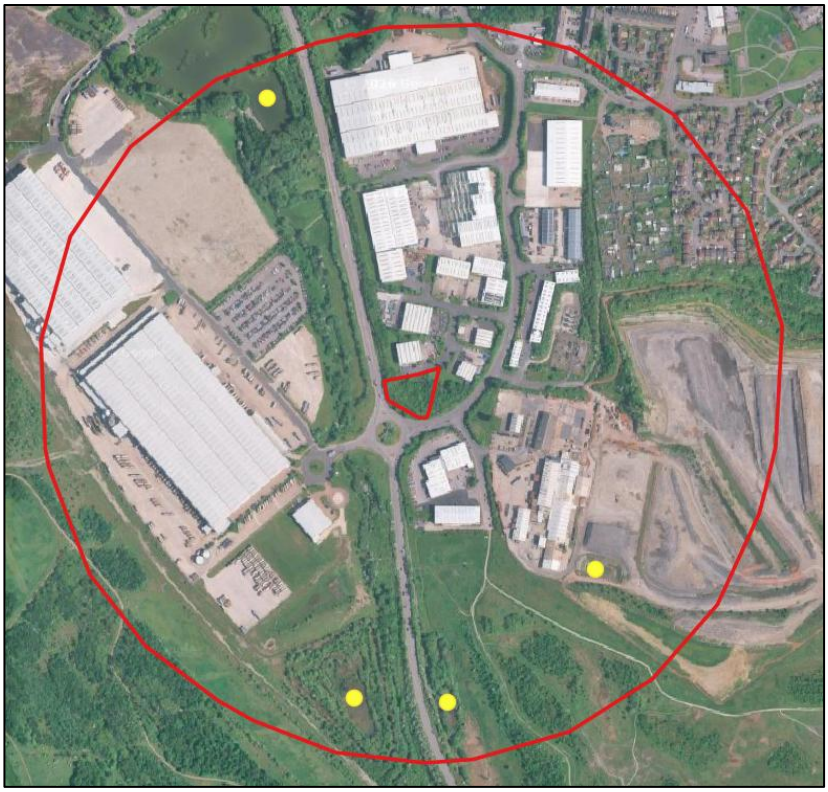
Street-view image

3.5. Description of Fauna.

3.5.1. No badger setts or field evidence was identified within the survey area.

3.5.2. There are no watercourses present within the survey area to provide any habitat for water voles, otters or crayfish.

3.5.3. The site survey and a search of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and aerial imagery found four ponds within 500m of the survey area, shown on the map on the following page. The closest waterbody is approximately 330m from the survey area but could not be visited due to private ownership. However, all of the ponds are separated from the survey area by busy roads and industrial units, which provide ecological barriers to the movement of great crested newts into the survey area. Therefore, overall, it is highly unlikely that great crested newts are present within the survey area. Furthermore, the clearance of the site has further made the terrestrial habitats on site unsuitable for great crested newts.



3.5.4. No built structures were present within the survey area to provide potential roosting opportunities for bats.

3.5.5. No trees with potential bat roost features were identified within the survey area.

3.5.6. The scrub habitat remaining on the edges of the survey area provides potentially suitable foraging habitat for bats and potential commuting routes between other areas of suitable habitats in the surrounding area. However, the high levels of light spill from surrounding industrial units and the recent clearance of the site is likely to significantly reduce the potential of the site for commuting and/or foraging bats. Overall, it is assessed as having low potential for foraging and commuting bats.

3.5.7. There is potential for nesting birds within the remaining vegetation within the survey area between March and August (inclusive).

3.5.8. The site lacks suitable habitat for reptiles due to the recent clearance of the site. Furthermore, the survey area is surrounded by unsuitable urban habitats and ecological barriers such as roads, so the site is still likely to be unsuitable for reptiles if the habitats were allowed to regenerate. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that reptiles are present within the survey area.

3.5.9. The survey area lies outside the natural range of hazel dormouse and red squirrel and there are no records of these species within 2km of the survey area.

3.5.10. The survey area provides negligible for hedgehogs due to the industrial nature of the surrounding area and the presence of busy roads.

3.5.11. No invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area. Although the site has previously been cleared, no evidence of any invasive species was found within the remaining edges of scrub.

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4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) BASELINE.

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 habitat units only. There are no hedgerow or watercourse features on the site. Condition assessments have been calculated on the separate spreadsheet provided.

4.2. The site had been cleared prior to this survey, and no survey evidence is available to demonstrate the condition of the habitats prior to clearance. Therefore, as per the Statutory Metric user guidelines, the baseline conditions have been carried out in retrospect and a higher condition assessment has been assigned as a precautionary approach.

4.3. Habitat Units.

4.3.1. The area habitat calculations include all habitats that lie within the red line boundary of the site. The habitats baseline on the site was calculated at 2.8 units as demonstrated in the table below.

Habitat Type	Extent (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Dense scrub	0.3369	Medium	Moderate	2.7
Modified grassland	0.016	Low	Good	0.1
Total	**0.35**			**2.8**

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5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. The desktop data search shows that there are multiple statutory and non-statutory sites within 2km of the survey area. However, due to the distance of these and ecological barriers separating them from the survey area, there will be no direct impact as a result of the development of the site. Although the survey area lies within a risk zone for a SSSI, the risk zone does not apply to this type of development. Therefore, there will be no impact on any designated sites as a result of the development.

5.2. No badger setts or evidence of badger was found within the survey area. Therefore, the development of the site will have no impact on badger.

5.3. No watercourses were present within the survey area. Therefore, no suitable habitats were present for otters, water voles, or white-clawed crayfish and there will be no impact on these species as a result of the proposed development.

5.4. The site survey and a search of OS maps and aerial imagery found four ponds within 500m of the survey area. All of the ponds were separated from the survey area by ecological barriers. Furthermore, the clearance of the site to ground level has made the terrestrial habitats on the site unsuitable for great crested newts, Therefore, it is highly unlikely that great crested newts will be present within the survey area. There will be no impact on great crested newts as a result of the proposed works.

5.5. No built structures were present within the survey area to provide potential roosting opportunities for bats. Furthermore, no trees with bat roost potential were identified within the survey area. Therefore, there will be no impact on roosting bats as a result of the proposed works.

5.6. The site provides low potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Therefore, with a sensitive lighting scheme in place, it is unlikely that there will be any impact on foraging and/or commuting bats as a result of the proposed works.

5.7. The remaining vegetation on site provided suitable nesting habitat for birds during the breeding season, which extends from March to August each year. Therefore, any vegetation clearance carried out within the nesting bird season is likely to have a high impact on nesting birds.

5.8. The site is assessed as being unlikely to support reptiles due to the lack of suitable habitat following site clearance, and the surrounding industrial units and roads are likely to provide an ecological barrier to the movement of reptiles into the site. The presence of surrounding ecological barriers means it is unlikely that the survey area would be suitable for reptiles even if the habitats were allowed to regenerate. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the development of the site will have any impact on reptiles.

5.9. The site lies outside the known range of hazel dormouse and red squirrel. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on hazel dormouse or red squirrel.

5.10. The survey area provides negligible for hedgehogs due to the industrial nature of the surrounding area and the presence of busy roads. Therefore, there will be no impact on hedgehogs as a result of the proposed works.

5.11. No invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area. Although the site has previously been cleared, no evidence of any invasive species was found within the remaining edges of scrub. The site has now been covered with hardstanding, and no further vegetation clearance is due to take place. Therefore, the proposed development will not cause or allow the spread of such species into the wider environment.

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report is designed to advise the client of the initial survey results and baseline BNG assessment so that any potential ecological constraints identified can be considered within the site development plan. It also advises of any additional surveys or works that are required to allow full impact assessments to be undertaken.

6.2. Once all recommendations of the PEA have been considered, any necessary further surveys have been completed and the development plans have been finalised, there is a requirement for the report to be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) where details of all survey results, mitigation and ecological enhancements are included, to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact of the proposed development. This will also need to include a full BNG assessment of the site.

6.3. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented as part of the new development to ensure that all lighting is downward directional and directed away from any boundary vegetation or trees.

6.4. It is recommended that any further vegetation or site clearance works, if necessary, are carried out outside the nesting bird season. If this is not possible, it is recommended that the clearance works are immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey, carried out by a competent ecologist. Any active nests found plus a suitable buffer around them, must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

6.5. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

6.5.1. There is a requirement to provide an overall biodiversity net gain on the site. There will be a statutory requirement to deliver a net gain of at least 10% biodiversity units. There will also be a requirement to meet the trading rules of the Statutory Metric.

6.5.2. The development of the site has resulted in the loss of medium distinctiveness scrub habitat. Therefore, this can only be replaced with the same habitat type or higher distinctiveness habitat.

6.5.3. It is recommended that a copy of the draft landscaping proposals for the site are provided once they are drawn up so that the biodiversity calculations can be completed.

6.5.4. As the proposals are not likely to meet the required 10% net gain, offsite compensation will need to be considered to deliver any shortfalls and meet the trading rules.

6.6. Biodiversity Enhancements.

In addition to ensuring a net gain of biodiversity units is achieved on the site, there will be an expectation to provide some biodiversity enhancements for fauna species on the site. This can be achieved by providing a pair of tree-mounted bird boxes and a tree-mounted bat box in suitable locations on site. Additional enhancements can be recommended once the site layout has been agreed.

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Prepared by:	
Jess Brown MSc ACIEEM FRGS	Date: 23rd March 2026

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou BSc MCIEEM	Date: 26th March 2026

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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

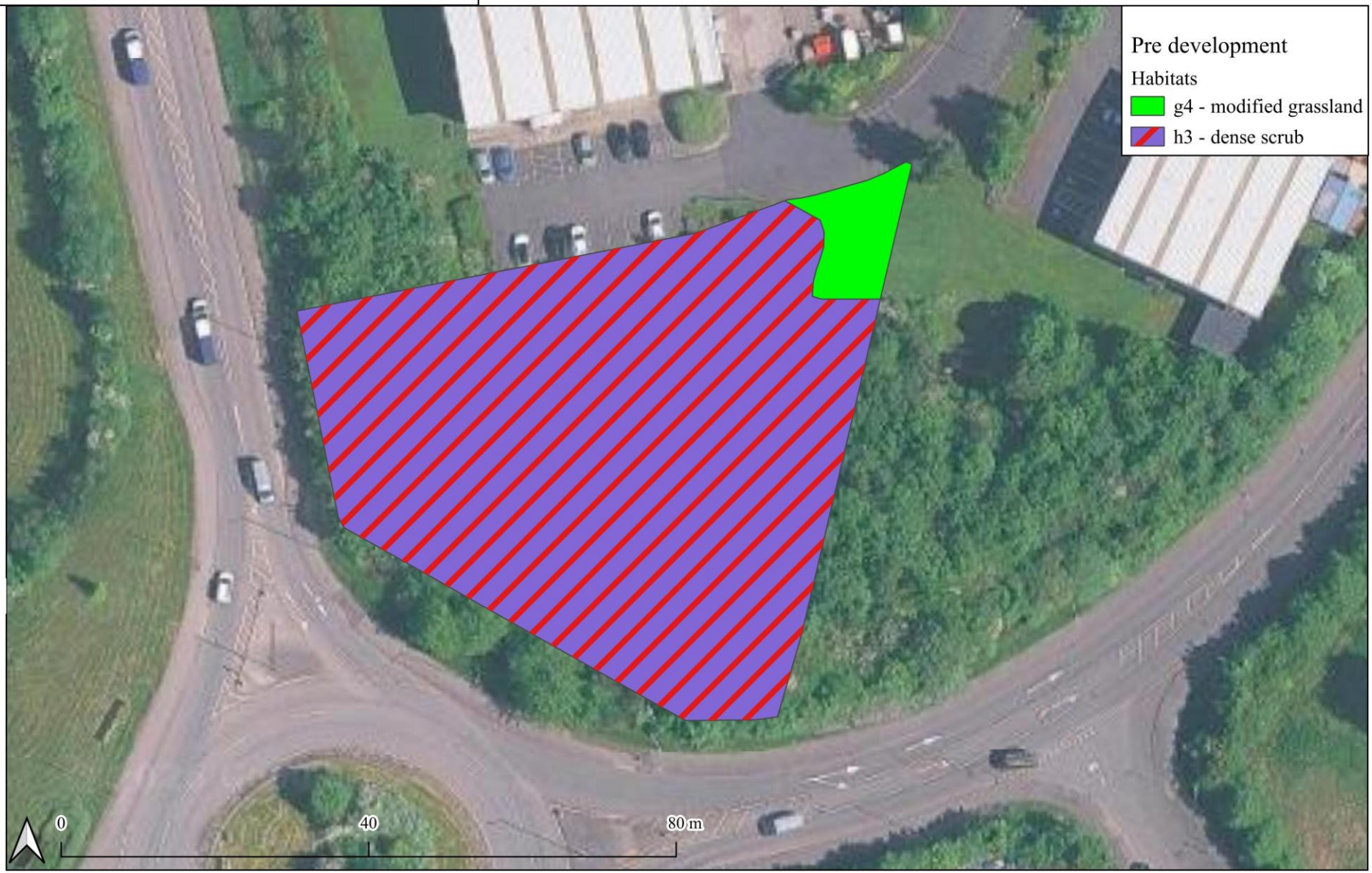
Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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 III. HABITAT MAP



Site: Park Springs, Grimethorpe

Reference: 260333

Date: 27.03.2026

Produced by: Jess Brown