

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.  
Ecological Consultants.**



**LAND ADJACENT TO 293 HOUGH ROAD,  
WOMBWELL.**

**OS REF: SE 39088 02527**

**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.**

**Ref No: 230811.**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

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	Page Number
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. SURVEY RESULTS.</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5. RECOMMENDATIONS.</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6. REFERENCES.</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix I. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix II. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.</b>	<b>18</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION.**

1.1. There are plans to construct two new dwellings on land adjacent to 293 Hough Lane, Wombwell.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site to determine whether there are any ecological issues associated with the planned works.

1.3. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey was carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023. This report outlines the findings of all the above 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.) (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 Derek Witcher 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.

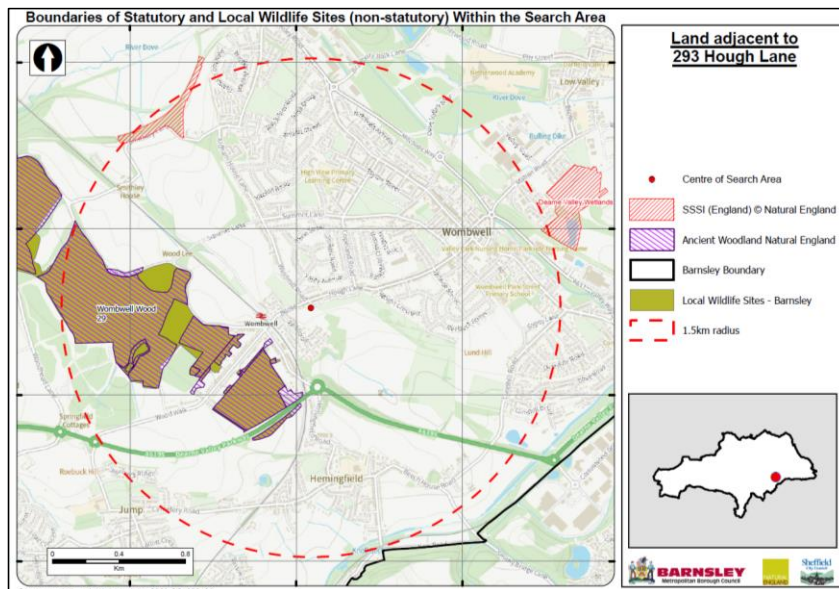
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### 3. SURVEY RESULTS.

#### 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 Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC).

3.1.2. The response included the map below showing the designated sites in the surrounding area. There are no National, International or Local designated sites close to the survey area. The closest are Local Wildlife sites within Wombwell Woods, to the west of the site.



3.1.3. The species records include numerous plant, insect and bird species from across the borough, with occasional records of common amphibians and of bats but none are relevant to the survey area.

3.1.4. The full data search results are 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 at the western end of Wombwell, surrounded by other residential area and a new housing development to the south.



3.2.2. The map below shows the location of the survey areas, shaded in yellow.



### 3.3. Description of Habitats.

Appendix II of this report contains annotated maps 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: -

- h3h – Mixed Scrub.
- g4 – Modified Grassland.
- u1e – Built linear feature.

### 3.3.1. h3h - Mixed Scrub.

3.3.1.1. There are areas of dense scrub at the top and bottom of the site, both areas including neglected shrubs planted when the site was a garden plot.

3.3.1.2. Species present include bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), silver birch saplings (*Betula pendula*) and an abundance of Russian Vine (*Fallopia baldschuanica*)



3.3.1.3. Under the small sites metric, there is no condition assessment for this habitat.

### 3.3.2. g4 - Modified Grassland.

Commented [RG1]: Numbering from here onwards

Secondary Code: 11 scattered trees.

3.3.2.1. The centre of the site is the remains of a lawn that is now overgrown with ruderals and cluttered with rubbish in the form of old fences and the remnants from a large tree that has been felled on the adjacent plot.



3.3.2.2. Species present include Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), nettles (*Urtica dioica*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), sow thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), thistle (*Epilobium montanum*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dock (*Rumex sp.*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), herb Bennett (*Geum urbanum*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*).

3.3.2.3. Under the small sites metric, there is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.2.4. Within this habitat, there is a group of six Lawson's Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) conifer trees.



**3.3.3. u1e – Built linear feature – fence.**

*Secondary code: 69 fence.*

The site is surrounded by fences, metal fences to the east and south and timber to the north and west. The metal fences are festooned with Russian Vine.



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

3.4.1. No badger setts or field signs were identified anywhere on the site and the site is assessed to be unsuitable foraging habitat for badgers.

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

3.4.3. There are no ponds close to the site to provide breeding habitat for great crested newts or common amphibians.

3.4.4. There are no buildings on the site that could potentially provide bat roosting opportunities.

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

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

3.4.7. The scrub and vegetation on the site provide opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year. No nests were identified during this survey.

3.4.8. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is small and is surrounded by residential areas.

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. There were no invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) growing within the survey area.

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## 4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are no statutory designated sites in the immediate area surrounding the site. Therefore, the proposed development will have **No Negative Impact** on such sites.

4.2. The habitat to be affected by the proposed works are areas of scrub and modified grassland.

4.3. The total baseline biodiversity units for the site are shown in the tables below. This has been calculated using the Small Sites Biodiversity Metric 4.0, as is the most recent version at the time of writing this report. This calculates there are 0.4702 Bu on the site at this time.

### *Area Habitats.*

Habitat Type	Area in Sqm	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Dense Scrub	131	Medium	Moderate	0.105
Modified grassland	352	Low	Moderate	0.141
Trees	244.7	Medium	Moderate	0.2246
<b>Total</b>	<b>483</b>			<b>0.4702</b>

4.4. There are no badger setts or field signs present on the site and no records of badger activity in the area and therefore there will be **No Negative Impact** on the species.

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

4.6. There are no ponds close to the site to provide breeding habitat for great crested newts or common amphibians and there will be **No Negative Impact** on amphibians and great crested newts.

4.7. There are no buildings on the site that could potentially provide bat roosting opportunities. Therefore, there will be **No Negative Impact** on bats roosting in buildings.

4.8. None of the trees on the site is of sufficient maturity to provide opportunities for roosting bats and therefore the works will have **No Negative Impact** on any bats roosting in trees.

4.9. The scrub on the site provides low value foraging habitat for bats. The area is thus assessed to be of low value for foraging bats and therefore there will be **No Negative Impact** on foraging and commuting bats as a result of the proposed works.

4.10. The scrub provides opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year. Therefore, the planned development will potentially have a **Moderate Negative Impact at Site Level** on nesting birds if any scrub is cleared during the nesting season. However, with vegetation being cleared outside the nesting season and with due care, this can be reduced to **No Negative Impact**.

4.11. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is small and confined and there are only a small number of reptile records in the data search results. The proposed development is **unlikely to have a Negative Impact** on reptiles.

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

4.13. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, with no suitable habitat present on the site. There will be **No Negative Impact** on the species.

4.14. There were no invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) growing within the survey area and therefore, there will be **No Negative Impact** on the spread of Schedule 9 plants.

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## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. It is recommended that native species be planted on site to arrive at a Biodiversity Nett Gain in excess of 10%. Once a landscape plan is available, this report will need to be converted to an Ecological Impact Assessment suitable for presentation to the Local Authority planners in support of the planning application.

5.2. It is recommended that Biodiversity enhancements are provided in line with the requirements of the NPPF. It is recommended that an integrated bat box and a pair of integrated swift nest boxes are installed in each new dwelling on the site.

5.3. It is recommended that any future vegetation clearance on the site is carried out outside the nesting bird season or, where vegetation clearance is necessary during the nesting season, it is immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey, carried out by a suitably experienced person and any active nests are left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

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Checked by:	
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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.

