Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

BLEACHCROFT FARM, CUDWORTH.

OS REF: SE 38102 08925

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT.

Ref No: **220484/EcIA/Rev 1.**

Date: **17th November 2022.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to develop existing derelict buildings at Bleachcroft Farm into new dwellings.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site in support of a planning application for the site.

1.3. The initial site survey was carried out on 16th May 2022. A subsequent dusk emergence survey was carried out on 29th August. This report outlines the findings of boat surveys and assesses the impact of the development.

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

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

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

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

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

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

2.4. 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 (3rd 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. The surveys were undertaken by a team of Whitcher Wildlife Ltd consultants led 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.

Surveyor, Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI, Natural England Bat Licence Registration Number: 2015-13205-CLS-CLS, Survey Level 2 (CL18)

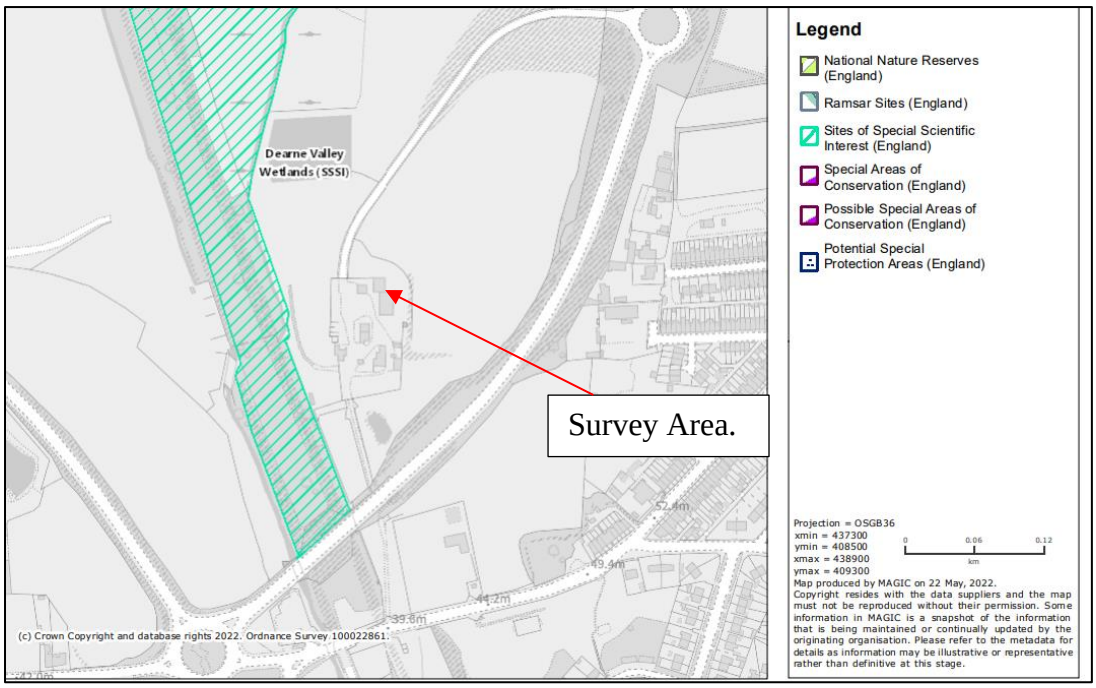
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3. BASELINE ECOLOGY.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1.A Data Search was undertaken using the MAGIC map, for designated sites close to the survey area.

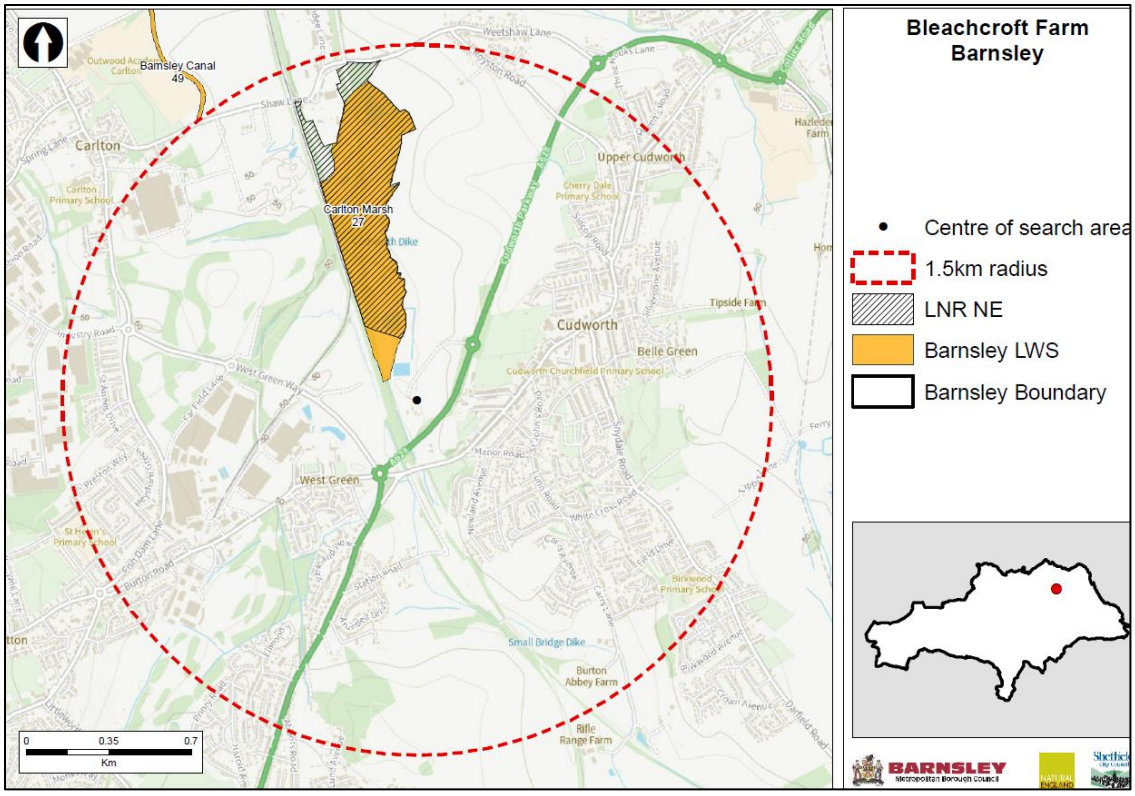
3.1.2. The results are shown below with Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI to the west of the survey area.



3.1.3. A desktop data search for existing records of protected species or designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to Barnsley Biodiversity Records Centre (BBRC).

3.1.4. Carlton March is the closest Local Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve. This lies approximately 0.3km to the north of the site as shown on the map below.

3.1.5. The site lies within the Dearne Valley Green Heart ‘Nature Improvement Area’ This has an implication for the BNG calculations and the level of biodiversity enhancements offered within any site.



3.1.6. The data search results identified numerous protected species records. Most of the records were bird species in part due to Carlton Marsh being a popular bird watching venue.

3.1.7. There are records of water vole along Cudworth Dike but these are all historic are and nowhere near the two buildings to be converted.

3.1.8. There are records of reptile within Carlton Marsh but these are all of grass snake and the most recent record is from 2021. These are not relevant to the proposed works.

3.1.9. There are records of Schedule 1 birds on Bleachcroft Farm but predominantly around Pond B. These are historic with green sandpiper recorded in 1980, 1981 and 1993, Grasshopper warbler in 2012, merlin records from 1981and turtle dove from 1980 and 1982. These are all historic, all are in or around the pond and are not relevant to the conversion of the two buildings.

3.1.10. Additional records include invertebrates, bats and common amphibians. However, none of the records referred directly to the survey area.

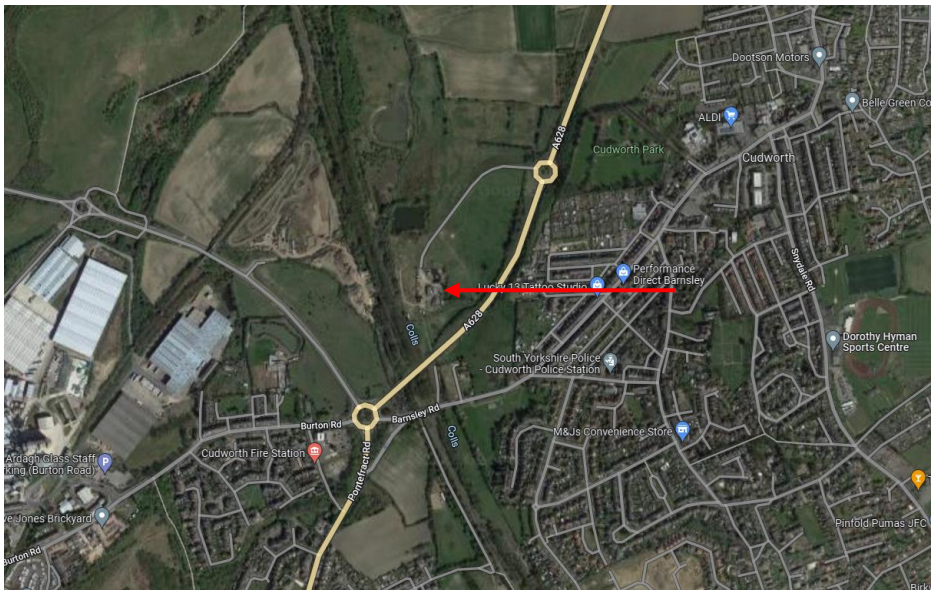
3.1.11. An additional data search request was sent to South Yorkshire Bat Group for bat roost records within 2km of the site.

3.1.12. There are records of common species of bats in the surrounding area but none that directly affect the survey area.

3.1.13. The data search results cannot be placed in the public domain but are available to the client on request.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the site, shown by the red arrow, and the surrounding area. The site is located to the north of Barnsley with the new Cudworth Bypass close to the east of the site, the residential areas of Cudworth beyond and with the large glassworks to the southwest.



3.2.2. The close-up aerial photo below shows the actual survey area, at the northern end of Bleachcroft Farm, shaded in yellow. The buildings to be converted are part of the Bleaching Mill that used to stand on this site.



3.3. Description of Habitats.

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

- Dense Scrub
- Ephemerals.
- Bare ground.
- Buildings
- Wall.

3.3.1. Dense Scrub.

3.3.1.1. There is a large area of bramble scrub, particularly on the eastern side of the site. Species present include bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and elder (*Sambucus nigra*). Mixed in with this and becoming increasingly buried are ruderal species like nettle (*Urtica dioica*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), and cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) along with dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), thistle (*Cirsium sp(p)),* cleavers (*Galium aparine*), and rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*)




3.3.1.2. As the habitat is assessed to be bramble scrub, a condition score is not needed as bramble scrub can only be of poor condition.

3.3.2. Ephemerals.

3.3.2.1. Closer to the buildings and along the western boundary wall there are areas of ephemeral perennial species including perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), common vetch, (*Vicia sativa*) creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus Repens*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), thistle (*Cirsium sp(p)),* cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), speedwell (*Veronica spp*.), cranesbill (*Geranium Sp.),* teasel (*Dipsacus sylvestris*) and wood avens (*Geum urbanum*)




3.3.2.2. The ephemeral habitat condition was assessed to be moderate in line with the table below.

Sparsely vegetated land - Ruderal/ephemeral

1	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for insects, birds and bats to live and breed. A single ecotone (i.e. scrub, grassland, herbs) should not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	**Fail**
2	There is a diverse range of flowering plant species, providing nectar sources for insects. These species may be either native, or non-native but beneficial to wildlife. NB - To achieve GOOD condition, criterion 2 must be satisfied by native species only (rather than non-natives beneficial to wildlife).	**Pass**
3	Invasive non-native species (Schedule 9 of WCA) cover less than 5% of total vegetated area. NB - To achieve GOOD condition, criterion 3 must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).	**Pass**

Condition assessment results:	**Condition assessment score:**
If 3 criteria assessed:	
• Passes 3 of 3 core criteria; AND • Meets the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3	**Good (3)**
• Passes 2 of 3 core criteria; OR • Passes 3 of 3 core criteria but does not meet the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3	Moderate (2)
• Passes 0 or 1 of 3 core criteria	Poor (1)

3.3.3. Bare Ground

There is a wide open area of roadway at the entrance to the site classed as bare ground.





3.3.4. Buildings

There are three buildings on the site. Two are derelict and one is a modern, prefabricated garage. These are dealt with in more detail later in this report.







3.3.5. Wall.

There are stone retaining and boundary walls around the site.





3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. No badger setts or badger field signs were found in the survey area and there are no records of badger in the surrounding area.

3.4.2. There are no watercourses present on or near the survey area to provide habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish. Cudworth Dyke flows to the west but sufficiently distanced from the site to be unaffected by the works,

3.4.3. There are three buildings present on the site. These were all assessed for their potential to provide opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.3.1. The main building is the derelict bleaching mill building. This is built with solid stone walls that have occasional holes and roosting opportunities, but these are exposed to the weather.

3.4.3.1.1. There is one section of slate roof still in place although in a very poor condition with no lining under the slates. The roof offers no potential for roosting bats but does provide some shelter.

3.4.3.1.2. This building is assessed to have a **low** potential for roosting bats in the cracks and crevices of the walls during the summer but no potential for winter hibernation as the walls are too exposed to the elements.



3.4.3.2. The building adjacent to the main building is also derelict. This is also built with solid stone walls that have occasional holes and roosting opportunities, but these are also exposed to the weather.

3.4.3.2.1. There is nothing left of the roof of this building.

3.4.3.2.2. This building is assessed to have a **low** potential for crevice roosting bats during the summer particularly in the southern gable end wall seen in the photograph below.





3.4.3.3. The final building is a prefabricated garage of a design that is totally unsuitable for roosting bats and no bat field signs were found.

3.4.3.3.1. This building is assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats during the summer or during the winter hibernation season.

3.4.3.4. A previous day time bat roost assessment has been undertaken by others and that also concluded that there was a low potential for a small number of crevices dwelling bat species in the open holes on the walls of the buildings.

3.4.4. There are no trees on site of sufficient maturity to contain features that may provide habitat for roosting bats.

3.4.5. The area around the buildings is open and exposed and assessed to have low potential for foraging bats. More favourable foraging habitat is available to the west of the site along the river and the woodland edge.

3.4.6. There are two ponds close to the site but there are no records of great crested newts within 2km of the site.

3.4.6.1. The first is located in a field at the southern end of the site that is known to contain a fish population. The pond is devoid of emergent vegetation other than a clump of reedmace in the centre.



3.4.6.2. The second pond is a large pond at the bottom of the farm. This is a large pond that is widely used by geese and wildfowl and is assessed to be unsuitable for breeding amphibians.



3.4.7. The scrub around the site provides some opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year. No active nests or nesting activity was identified during this survey.

3.4.8. The site within the farmyard is assessed to be unsuitable habitat for reptiles. There may be opportunities to the west of the site in the wetter areas of the farm, but these are outside the survey area and will be unaffected by the proposed works.

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

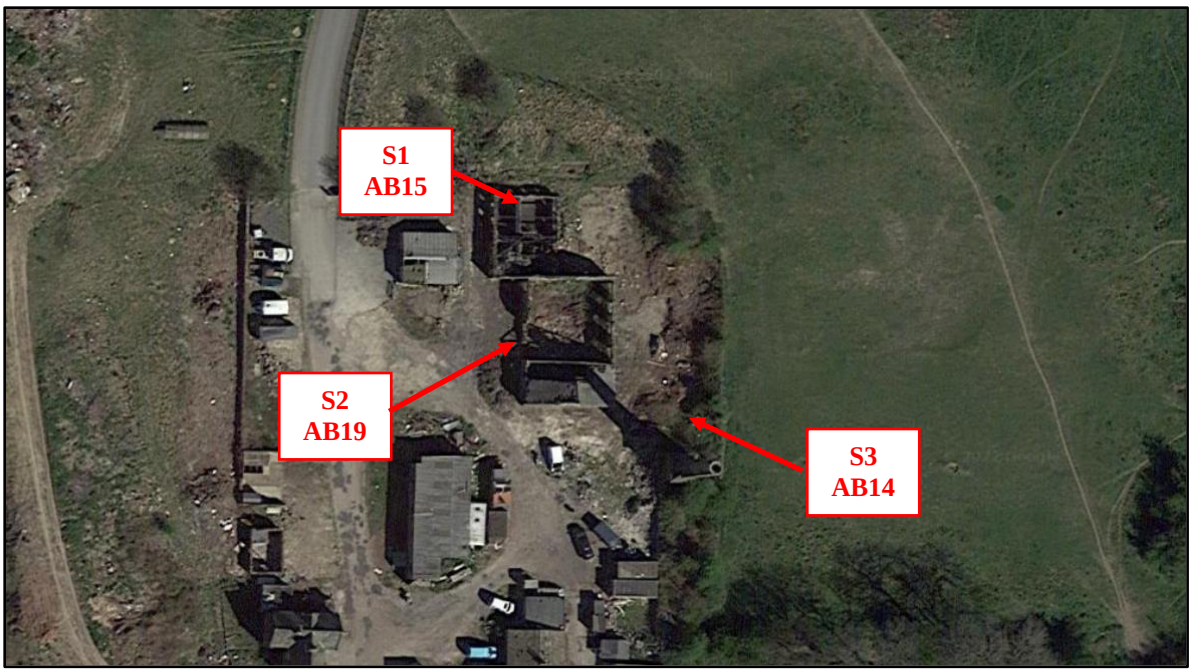
3.4.10. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels and lies outside the natural range of the species.

3.4.11. There are no alien invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) present on the site.

3.5. Dusk Emergence Survey Results – 29th August 2022.

3.5.1. A dusk emergence survey was carried out by three surveyors on the evening of 29th August 2022. One surveyor holds a current Natural England class licence (Ruth Georgiou 2015-11823-CLS-CLS) for surveying bats and the other two are experienced assistants.

3.5.2. The surveyors were positioned around the buildings in order to be able to view all aspects of the buildings simultaneously. Each surveyor was equipped with a Batbox Duet detector and a two-way radio for communications. In addition, three static Anabat recorders were deployed to record bat activity for subsequent computer analysis using Analook software. The positions of the surveyors (S) and the Anabat recorders (AB) were as shown below.



3.5.3. The evening was fine, dry and cloudy. There was a temperature of 16 at 20:00, which dropped to 15°C at the end of the survey. The survey continued until 21:35 and sunset was at 20:04.

3.5.4. All surveyors recorded intermittent Common Pipistrelle foraging activity from 20:26 to the end of the survey. All bats seen flew onto the site from all directions, no bats were seen to emerge from the buildings.

3.5.5. The recordings from the Anabats placed next to each surveyor reflected the observations of the surveyors, including one noctule bat that was recorded at 20:27.

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4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS, MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS.

4.1. Designated Sites.

4.1.1. Assessment.

The Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI lies to the west of the site. The site is designated for its breeding assemblage of gadwall, shoveler, garganey, pochard, bittern, black headed gull and willow tit along with diverse assemblages of breeding birds of lowland damp grasslands, lowland scrubland, a mixed assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins and lowland fen.

4.1.2. Mitigation.

No mitigation is required in connection with the development of these two small buildings.

4.1.3. Residual Effects.

The proposed development will have No Residual Impact on the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI.

4.2. Habitats.

4.2.1. Assessment.

4.2.1.1. The proposed development will impact mainly on the existing buildings and immediate surrounds. There will also be some impact on ephemeral perennials and scrub around the building.

4.2.1.2. There are no Priority Habitats as listed under the NERC Act 2006 present on the site.

4.2.1.3. The habitat to be affected by the proposed development is predominantly an area of scrub and ephemerals around the buildings that are assessed to be of low

ecological value. The total area Baseline Biodiversity Units on the site are shown in the table below.

Habitat Type	Area in Sqm.	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Scrub	885	Medium	Poor	0.4071Bu
Ephemerals	460	V Low	Moderate	0.2116Bu
Buildings and hard standings.	670	N/A	N/A	0Bu
Total	2,015			0.6187

4.2.2. Mitigation.

4.2.2.1. Buildings and hard standing areas will be the same post development. Of the remaining area, 550 sqm will be planted with high value mixed scrub and 795sqm will be vegetated garden. These are shown in the table below.

Habitat Type	Area in Sqm.	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Mixed Scrub	550	Medium	Moderate/Good	0.5315Bu
Vegetated garden	795	V Low	Poor	0.1765Bu
Buildings and hard standings.	670	N/A	N/A	0Bu
Total	2,015			0.7080

4.2.2.2. This gives a resultant 14.43% increase in biodiversity Value.

4.2.3. Residual Effects.

There will be a **Small Positive Residual Increase** in Biodiversity value post development.

4.3. Species.

4.3.1. Bats.

4.3.1.1. Assessment.

4.3.1.1.1. There are three buildings present on the site and two are assessed to have low potential for roosting bats.

4.3.1.1.2. During the dusk emergence survey of the buildings, no bats were found to be roosting in the buildings and the level of bat foraging activity was low and with the exception of one noctule that passed over, all activity was Common Pipistrelles only.

4.3.1.2. Mitigation.

4.3.1.2.1. The planting of mixed scrub will provide additional bat foraging habitat on the site.

4.3.1.2.2. Site lighting will be by down lighting designed to avoid direct impact on bat foraging habitat.

4.3.1.2.3. The installation of bat bricks as Biodiversity Enhancements will increase the bat roosting opportunities on site.

4.3.1.3. Residual Effects.

There will be a **Minor Positive Residual Impact** on bats.

4.3.2. Birds.

4.3.2.1. Assessment.

There are two derelict buildings present on the site and these are assessed to provide low potential for nesting birds. There is also some potential for nesting birds in the bramble scrub on the site.

4.3.2.2. Mitigation.

4.3.2.2.1. Vegetation clearance and site development will be undertaken outside the nesting season which extends from March to September. Where such works are necessary within the nesting season, a nesting bird survey will be carried out no more than two days before the proposed works. Any active nests found, plus a buffer zone around them, will be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

4.3.2.2.2. The planting of mixed scrub will provide additional nesting opportunities on the site.

4.3.2.2.3. The installation of swift bricks as Biodiversity Enhancements will increase the bird nesting opportunities on site.

4.3.2.3. Residual Effects.

There will be a **Minor Positive Residual Impact** on nesting birds.

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5. COMPENSATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES.

5.1. Biodiversity enhancements will be provided within the development in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

5.2. One integrated bat brick will be installed in each of the two buildings. These will be built into the gable end walls of the two renovated dwellings. These will be Habibat boxes as shown below or equivalent colour matched to the stone finish of the wall.



5.4. Two integrated swift nest boxes will be installed high in the gable end walls of the two renovated dwellings and will be as shown below or equivalent.



5.5. All garden fences will be furnished with at least one 130mm square access in each run of fence to enable hedgehogs free access to move around the site and between gardens.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 17th November 2022.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 19th November 2022.

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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. 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.

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

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

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

Surveys

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

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

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

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATS agreement. Numerous species are

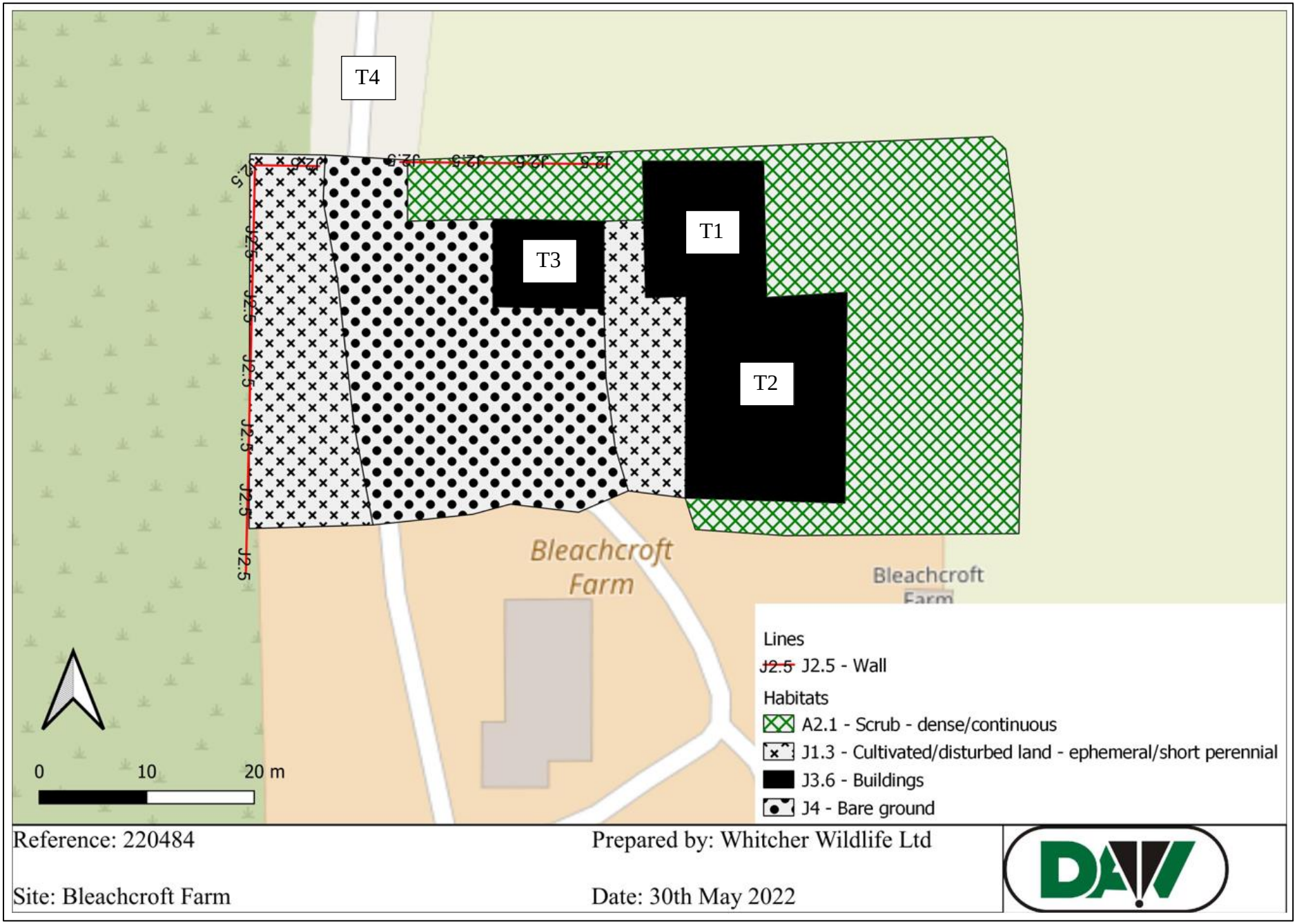
also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

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

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

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

Appendix III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Appendix IV. TARGET NOTES.

T1 and T2. Buildings to be converted into new dwellings.

T3. Prefabricated garage to be demolished.

T4. Access road to the farm.

Appendix V. DEARNE VALLEY WETLANDS SSSI CITATION.

Site name: Dearne Valley Wetlands **Metropolitan County:** South Yorkshire

Metropolitan Borough: Barnsley, Rotherham

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheets: 111 **National grid reference:** SE434027

Notification date: 13 May 2021 **Area:** 649.99 ha

Reasons for notification:

Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI is of special interest for the following nationally important features:

- Breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera*, shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, garganey *Spatula querquedula*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and willow tit *Poecile montanus klienschmidti*.
- Non-breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera* and shoveler *Spatula clypeata*.
- Diverse assemblages of breeding birds of Lowland damp grasslands, Lowland scrub and a mixed assemblage of Lowland open waters and their margins and Lowland fen.

General description:

Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI is situated in South Yorkshire and comprises a network of 22 wetland, scrub and woodland areas that extends through the catchment of the River Dearne. The site lies within the local authority areas of Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster and is within the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area.

The area is post-industrial urban fringe comprising former mining settlements set in a mosaic of farmland, woodland, wetland and floodplain habitats. Large areas of open water and associated habitats within the River Dearne catchment have been created as a result of post-industrial restoration and these areas now support a substantial ornithological interest.

Dearne Valley Wetlands comprises a series of shallow and deep open waters with an associated range of marginal habitats including ditches, reedbed, marsh, wet grassland, scrub and woodland. This range of habitats provides valuable nesting, resting and feeding conditions which support nationally important numbers and assemblages of birds in the breeding and non-breeding seasons.

The open water sites and associated habitats support nationally important numbers of breeding gadwall *Mareca strepera*, shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, garganey *S. querquedula*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris* and black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. The site also supports nationally important numbers of non-breeding gadwall and shoveler.

Dearne Valley Wetlands is a stronghold for the nationally rare and declining willow tit, *Poecile montanus klienschmidti*, its wet woodland and scrub habitats supporting ideal breeding territories for the species.

The network of wetland and scrub habitats across the site supports a range of breeding bird assemblages. The large areas of open water and marginal habitats, fen and wet grassland at sites including Carlton Marsh, Edderthorpe Flash, Wombwell Ings, Broomhill Flash, Old Moor, Bolton Ings and Adwick Washlands provide a range of water depths, vegetation structure and food availability which support a large range of breeding bird species. Deeper water provides an abundance of fish for bittern whilst shallower water supports a range of aquatic invertebrates and plants for dabbling and diving ducks such as garganey, shoveler, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula* and pochard, and waders such as avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Marginal vegetation, fen and wet

grassland provide a variety of vegetation heights for nesting and concealment for species such as garganey, gadwall, shoveler, sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, water rail *Rallus aquaticus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniculus* and bearded tit *Panurus biarmicus* and an abundance of soil and ground-surface invertebrates for species such as lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and redshank *Tringa totanus*.

Areas of scrub are also present throughout the site, either scattered or in distinct blocks with key areas at Carlton Marsh, Warbler Way, The Mullins and Barrow Colliery Site. The nesting and feeding opportunities provided support species such as long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, garden warbler *Sylvia borin*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia*, willow tit, lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* , linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.

Toolbox Talk: Bats

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants

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



Identification.

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

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

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





Habitat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Legislation.

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

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

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